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THE RELATION BETWEEN HERESY PROCEEDINGS AND THE QUEST FOR
A FIRM PROTESTANT ECCLESIOLOGY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
Vernon Luther Story
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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Within liberal American Protestantism today great confusion reigns with regard to what might be termed "the limits of orthodox belief". On the one hand, there is great reluctance about being committed to a particular formula or standard of Protestant Orthodoxy, while on the other hand there is great yearning for a more-or-less constant definition of what it is to be an acceptable Protestant. This paper addresses itself to this ambivalent yearning, this anxiety which at its worst is a longing for security, but at its best is a sincere questing for a tradition one can honestly celebrate.

This yearning, of course, is not a novel phenomenon in the history of Christianity. But in a pluralistic society such as America with more than two hundred denominations and sects laying claims to their brands of orthodoxy,¹ the yearning has become crucially problematic. By what standards can any orthodoxy make its claims? Are there any guidelines or limits for Protestant belief and practice which might transcend the arbitrary character of previous orthodoxies?

The problem of heresy is intimately related to any such quest for the boundaries of orthodoxy. Functionally speaking, heresy represents the outer limits of a doctrine of the church. Whenever a body of believers takes up the task of seriously defining what are the

¹Frank S. Mead, Handbook of Denominations in the United States (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961).

essentials of belief, heresies occur and are identified, i.e., persons or movements within the parent body who do not agree with the consensus in power are brought into judgment. The problem of this paper is to discover whether or not it is possible for contemporary American Protestantism to clarify at the same time its posture of essential beliefs and avoid the excesses of heresy proceedings.

Scope of the problem.

It would be impossible in one paper to review all the major heresy trials in the history of the church, giving attention to personalities, charges and counter-charges, or the formation of schismatic protest. Therefore this paper will select only particular heresy proceedings which demonstrate the process by which the church has sought to define itself in every century, with an eye open for insights into the current American confusion. It would also be impossible for one paper to encompass in its vision the entire spectrum of American Protestantism, seeking to apply insights to each diverse tradition within the general Protestant family. Therefore this paper will address only that major grouping of Protestant churches which constitute the "mainstream", i.e., the participants in the Consultation on Church Union.²

Throughout the paper a balance will be sought between the analysis of specific date (such as, for example, the structures for heresy proceedings in the Protestant Episcopal Church), and the theoretical investigation of the process by which churches seek to

²Consultation on Church Union 1967 (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1967), lists ten participating churches as of January 1967.

define the limits of orthodoxy. No attempt will be made to give conclusive justification for the results of any heresy proceeding; rather, the focus will be upon the long-term effects, both positive and negative, of such proceedings.

Assumptions of the investigator.

The first assumption is that this study, in common with every other, would be impossible to undertake free from any bias, conscious or unconscious. If a euphemism is preferred, the phrases "thought-context" or "presuppositional gestalt of the investigator" might be substituted for the term "bias." At any rate, the issue seems not to be between an objective or subjective approach to the problems under investigation, but between honesty and dishonesty with regard to the presuppositions which consciously intrude into the investigator's work. This investigator assumes that "absolute objectivity" is a valuable myth which serves to keep constructive anxiety alive with regard to the responsible use of data.

Perhaps the major assumption underlying this paper is that heresy is out of style today because self-definition is out of style, i.e., churchmen are reluctant to commit themselves to a serious clarification of essential doctrine because of the exclusive and limit-setting character of all clear self-definition. Or as Bonhoeffer put it, "It is hard to believe because it is hard to obey."³ This "reluctance" is undoubtedly fed by the remembrance of the intolerance and repression

³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 61-86.

which has so often accompanied heresy proceedings, witch hunts, star-chamber appearances, and other attempts at "defending the faith".

A corollary assumption is that American Protestantism is threatened on two flanks as it seeks to clarify its contemporary posture. It is threatened by (1) the tendency to define itself so narrowly that it becomes sectarian, absolutistic, hostile to free interchange of diverse opinion, and (2) the tendency to define itself so loosely that it becomes careless about the consequences of belief, universalistic, predisposed in favor of all novelty, tolerant to the point of becoming "religion-in-general". The threat of becoming heretical, of betraying the essential witness of the Christian Tradition, has historically served as a warning against either tendency. The investigator assumes that without this implied threat of heresy, the church has lost both rudder and ballast.

Methodology of the investigation.

This study will begin by tracing the evolution of the category heresy from its Jewish and New Testament origins up to the present era. A chapter will then be devoted to non-theological factors in heresy proceedings, another will focus on the destructive effects of heresy trials, and still another chapter will discuss legitimations of doctrinal limit-setting. The final chapter will seek to reclaim the category heresy as a viable "over-againstness" which would stimulate Protestants toward rigorous self-definition.

This paper is particularly indebted to those analysts of American Christianity who seem most clearly to appreciate that vital

tension between doctrinal relativism and doctrinal absolutism, an understanding of which motivates this study. Among those authors who have been particularly helpful through the course of this study, the following are of note: Martin Marty, for his case against religion-in-general. John B. Cobb, Jr., for his lively sense of the variety in Protestantism. Winfred E. Garrison, for his work toward an ecumenical unity without compulsion or thought-control. Samuel H. Miller, for his case against rationalism and in favor of the poetic and mythological dimension in religion. John M. Krumm, for his listing of contemporary American heresies. James A. Pike, for his crusade against theological idolatry. William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, for their analysis of the proceedings against Bishop Pike. H. Richard Niebuhr, for his treatment of the sociological dynamics of denominationalism. Roland H. Bainton, for his clear sense of the stakes involved in the Protestant struggle toward religious liberty.

Each of these authors is discussed in the text of this paper, and full bibliographical details are included in the bibliography.

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CATEGORY "HERESY"

This chapter presumes to trace the development of the category "heresy" from its Jewish antecedents, through its appropriation by the Early Church, and up to the stage of its current unpopularity in American Protestantism. The focus will be upon definitions of the term which indicate the alterations in both structure and application which have occurred as doctrines have crystallized in the life of the Church. Due to the limitations of this study, there will be heavy reliance upon secondary sources from the history of doctrines field.

Pre-Christian definitions in the Jewish community.

"Heresy" is an English translation of the Greek αἵρεσις, which, in its earliest occurrences, appears to be without pejorative or derogatory content. The Arndt-Gingrich lexicon¹ lists two major usage-groupings: (1) a sect, party, or school such as the Sadducees (Acts 5:17), Pharisees (Acts 15:5), Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) and Greek philosophical schools, and (2) an opinion, dogma, or way of thinking. From these two divisions, a whole family of meanings derive, among them "dissension", "faction", and "destructive opinion". Josephus used the term without disparagement, in the same manner as Luke in Acts 5:17: "the party of the Sadducees".

There is another strand of meanings, however, more clearly

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p.23

anticipating later usage by the Church. These relate to the matter of choice, self-will or individualism. George Cross² notes the occurrence of this connotation in the Septuagint where αἵρεσις related to choices good or bad. Here the concern is with those within the Jewish community who maintain ideas somewhat right or left of the normative Judaism of the day. The Hebrew word for heresy is minuth, meaning "kind" or "species," or kopher, meaning "denier of the root", i.e., of the fundamental principles.³ It seems probable, however, that the negative or repressive connotations of "heresy" in the Jewish community have never produced the kinds of hysterical frightfulness as they have in the Christian community which fell heir to them. Israel Abrahams writes,

The conception of heresy has always been vague in the synagogue; for freedom of thought, though often denied by fanatics, has been a recurrent characteristic of Judaism. Conduct, moreover, is easier to observe and judge than opinion; and, though, under stress of pressing controversies, attempts were made to define opinions which would exclude men from sharing communal rights, it may be said that for long periods conformity to practice, both ritual and moral, would be held to cover a good deal of eccentricity in theory. . . . the synagogue may be said to be free, on the one hand, from rigidity, and, on the other, destitute of clarity as to the ideas on which a charge of heresy could be based.⁴

It would appear from the last sentence in the above quotation that Judaism has been able to live with a degree of "toleration" which has been historically denied to the Christian tradition. In Judaism, the locus of authority has been cultic, ritual, and racial in character

²George Cross, "Heresy (Christian)," in James Hastings (ed.) Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), VI, 614.

³Ibid., VI, 623.

⁴Ibid., VI, 622.

whereas in the Christian community another kind of "glue" (namely, the ideological cohesiveness of normative doctrine) became necessary. Because it was a cosmopolitan and supra-racial (Jew, Greek, Gentile, Roman) movement, the Christian community could not for long afford the freedom of thought which Abrahams describes as the peculiar characteristic of the synagogue.

This is not to say, however, that there have been no clear normative ideas in Judaism; rather, it is to admit that the use of doctrines as the major criteria by which orthodoxy could be distinguished from heresy is a phenomenon more characteristic of Christianity than of Judaism. This is not to make the charge of ideological anarchy, or to claim that there have been no theological controversies in the Jewish community. Doctrines have simply played a less definitive role both in terms of what it is to be "of faith", and in terms of the resolution of controversy. In modern parlance, there has been less "hardening of the categories" in normative Judaism than in the major streams of Christianity.

Even when hard pressed for survival, the Jewish community has somehow managed this cohesive kind of doctrinal liberty. Abrahams describes a series of crises in Jewish thought, ending with the following:

. . .in such cases controversies more or less virulent broke out, and the litigants would freely hurl at each other charges of heresy and threats of excommunication. The efficacy of the charge would be determined only after considerable discussion, and the practical good sense of the community would in the end prevail to soften asperities and so enlarge the place of the tent as to find room for all, if not with cordiality, at least without churlishness.⁵

⁵Ibid., VI, 623.

Apparently, a bad action or behavior (such as deliberate attempts at setting up a break-away movement) has represented a greater threat to the on-going Jewish community than have the most questionable ideas. The fear of physical disunity has outweighed all "lesser" considerations. "The feeling against heresy has always been weaker than the dislike of separation. In fact, it was maintained in the Talmud that the rule held: once a Jew always a Jew".⁶ According to this perspective a deliberate separation from the cultic community constitutes the most calamitous offense possible, making a distinctly theological deviation appear pale by comparison.

Heinrich Schlier notes how heresy becomes more serious when it becomes intermixed with schism. Originally, as is the case with Josephus, heresy is neutral.

But soon, when certain minim separated themselves from the orthodox Rabbinic tradition, it came to be used only of trends within Judaism opposed by the Rabbis, and therefore sensu malo. The term thus stigmatized certain groups as "heretical". This sense is found in Rabbinic writings belonging to the end of the 1st and the early part of the 2nd century A.D.⁷

When considered in this light, the problem for normative Judaism has been to distinguish or ferret out those thought-movements which have the overtones or leanings toward separation, the splitting up of the cultic unity. The Christian community, on the other hand, has

⁶Ibid., VI, 624.

⁷Heinrich Schlier, "αἵρεσιν," in Gerhard Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I, 182.

found it necessary to search out questionable ideas at a stage even before there has been the slightest threat of schism.

Heresy in the Early Church.

There are several dangers implicit in the attempt to distinguish Christian from Jewish approaches to the problem of doctrinal self-definition. Perhaps the chief of these dangers is that of assuming an exclusivistic narrowness with regard to the universal implications of belief on the part of the Jewish community. According to this view there was an indifference to the universal or cosmic consequences of doctrines held to be normative within Judaism. To counter this danger, the researcher need only to look into the theological consequences of Solomon's reign where the religious outlook was forced by economic, cosmopolitan and sociological pressures to become more universal in perspective, and into the style of prophets such as Amos, who saw the hand of Yahweh at work in the affairs of foreign nations.

Schlier can also help counter this tempting danger where he writes,

. . .the word ^Y**αἵρεσις** seems to have been suspect in Christianity from the very first, and when it is used as a Christian technical term in conscious or unconscious connections either with the Greek philosophical schools or the Jewish sects it denotes at once societies outside Christianity and the Christian Church. Hence it does not owe its meaning to the development of an orthodoxy.⁸

In this light, the question of orthodoxy is posterior to the hardening-up of the term heresy. This forces the question, "What

⁸Ibid.

originated the need for the negative term heresy, if the development of normative ideas in the New Testament Church was not responsible?"

Paul, in Galatians 5:20, includes heresy among a long list of the works of "the flesh", concluding (in v. 21) that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God".

Schlier suggests the answer where he writes that the formulation of the ecclesia concept in itself called forth an opposite concept:

"**ἐκκλησία** and **αἵρεσις** are material opposites. The latter cannot accept the former; the former excludes the latter."⁹

Again it must be noted that heresy lacks any precise technical sense at the New Testament stage of its development. It remained for later generations of Christian apologetes to work out the implications of the term for the Church of the delayed parousia. For the moment, Paul saw heresy in terms of an eschatological threat to the community which Jesus had called into being:

... **αἵρεσις** is understood as an eschatological magnitude. In this respect it is distinguished from **σχίσμα**, and obviously indicates something more serious. The greater seriousness consists in the fact that **αἵρεσις** affect the foundation of the Church in doctrine (2Pet.2:1), and that they do so in such a fundamental way as to give rise to a new society alongside the **ἐκκλησία**.¹⁰

This "greater seriousness" seems to be related to a particular

⁹Ibid., I, 183.

¹⁰Ibid. This eschatological dimension harks back to Mark 13:5f where Jesus warns against "false Christs and false prophets" who will arise to lead the elect astray; also to Acts 20:29 where Paul speaks of fierce wolves who will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (RSV)

offense against that corporate vision of the gathered community of believers seen by Paul, and before him, by the "eyewitnesses" of the historical Jesus. There is probably another dynamic operative in this process, that of an instinctual reaction against the spectre of a magnificent beginning scattered into oblivion. This dynamic would require no rationale at all--simply an emotional revolt against the probable swallowing-up of a movement which had offered hope. This may explain why in the New Testament the term heresy lacks any technical definition. The emotional dimension, the fear of dissolution, may have outweighed the theological or organizational factors.

It is clear enough that the church of the first two centuries lacked the corporate techniques common to Judaism for putting pressure on suspected departures from normative belief or practice. Peter could not even for long insist upon circumcision as a fundamental requirement for Christians, nor could a clear prohibition of meat offered to idols provide a common basis. This is not to say that there existed no unanimity whatever in the first two centuries, or that chaos was the chief characteristic of the Church in its infancy. At precisely this point there seems to be a divergence of opinion among historians.

One group emphasizes the open-ended nature of the early Christian communities, stressing their lack of rigid standards. According to this view, the Church was fluid and predominantly local with an emphasis upon personal rather than corporate devotion and discipline. Like all infants, this movement was highly vulnerable to the abrasive competition of the cultures into which it was invading. As to cohesive

elements within these communities, there was little more than a cluster of common memories and oral traditions.

Winfred Garrison seems to take this route when he suggests that "The Church existed before it had any organization"¹¹, and that the early Christians even got along without the New Testament (as finally binding for Christians everywhere) until the fourth century. Furthermore, "there is no evidence that Christians believed or were expected to believe that the apostles were inerrant either in their oral teachings or in their writings."¹²

According to the first group of historians, this fluidity provided fertile ground for movements within the general sub-culture of the Christian movement which could exploit the obvious dynamic of the movement for purposes not wholly in line with the earliest visions of the ecclesia, the "called-out ones". And yet, universally acceptable guidelines were not immediately forthcoming, no matter how pressing the need. The canon, which came later as a definitive source of normative judgment, took four centuries to firm up. In this light it seems remarkable that the ecclesia as a self-conscious entity survived several centuries of rather chaotic fluidity.

Garrison quotes a certain W. R. Matthews who "regards it as the greatest calamity in the history of the Church that it ever adopted any other criterion of faith than the original one, which was 'Jesus is

¹¹Winfred Ernest Garrison, The Quest and Character of a United Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 39.

¹²Ibid., p. 50.

Lord'.¹³ This not uncommon attitude among Protestant reflects a disturbing naivete and prejudice concerning the tortuous process by which the Corpus Christi became Corpus Christianum, and by which power (dunamis) became authority (exousia).¹⁴

There is a second group of historians, however, who see the infant Church in less fluid terms, tending rather to draw attention to the elements of cohesion. In a chapter on tradition and scripture, J. N. D. Kelly represents this position where he asserts,

The importance of the Old Testament as a doctrinal norm in the primitive Church cannot be exaggerated. . . .the doctrinal authority ascribed to it was based on the apparently unquestioning assumption that, correctly interpreted, it was a Christian book and that the prophets in particular were really testifying to Christ and His glory. . . .that the Jewish Scriptures did not belong to the Jews but to the Christians was universally shared.¹⁵

The other chief cohesive norm was, as Kelly sees it, "the testimony of the apostles" in both written and oral form. The unwritten portion of this body of testimony was held to be as binding as the written. Kelly thinks it plausible that the term "apostolic testimony" referred to "the common body of facts and doctrines, definite enough in outline though with varying emphases, which found expression in the Church's day-to-day preaching, liturgical action and catechetical instruction, just as much as in its formal documents."¹⁶

¹³Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁴Garrison (Ibid., p. 52) thinks it significant that Paul uses the term dunamis 46 times in his epistles and exousia only 27.

¹⁵J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 32.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 34.

According to this position, the most characteristic aspect of the primitive Church was its unanimity. The Old Testament seen from a Christological perspective, coupled with the testimony of the apostles, provided a co-ordinated safeguard against any threat to the movement. Kelly also cites as additional norms such cohesive factors as Tertullian's "rule of faith" (regula fidei)¹⁷ and the unbroken succession of bishops who trace back lineally to the apostles. According to Tertullian, these bishops were entrusted with "an infallible charism of truth" (charisma veritatis certum).¹⁸

It is not the purpose of the present study to make a decision in favor one or the other historical perspective, to choose either "chaotic fluidity" or "unanimity" as the chief characteristic of the primitive Church. Both Garrison and Kelly would probably agree that there was a great deal of both present in the struggle. The investigator favors the "chaotic fluidity" view, being more impressed by the variety and conflict evidenced than by the uniformity.

In any case, the development of heresy as a technical term seems to parallel the development of the view that the Church is the Divine institute of salvation and depository of saving truth. Cross simplifies the whole matter when he writes,

In the long struggle to preserve the distinctive character of the Christian faith the emphasis fell on doctrine, and it became necessary to the Church's existence that there should be a duly accredited channel of the tradition. The claim of Apostolic succession in the episcopate and the creed were the outcome.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., p. 40

¹⁸Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁹Cross, op. cit., VI, 614.

The problem with this quotation is that it places the burden of doctrinal development upon purely secular forces, upon the need to survive. In order to preserve its distinctive character, the Church formulated the episcopacy and the creeds. To put it this way is to ignore the ultimate dimension into which the "need to survive" was usually cast. That dimension involved the conviction that in the Christ Event something final had taken place, something which by its very nature demanded preservation. Heresy was thus considered more than a trifling irritation on the sociological plane, a fly in the institutional ointment. Not only did gnosticism, libertinism, Greek speculation, and hostile Judaism threatened the life of the Christian communities on the sociological level. These movements also represented a specific denial of that revelation which (and without dreaming it up for themselves) had broken in upon Christians with an ultimate claim.

It is possible, of course, to make of this a blanket justification for all the fabrication and monological exclusivism which were also at work in Christian apologetics. It would have been possible for example, to anathematize a man like Marcion simply on the grounds that he was dealing with an "inferior" revelation. Even though he was condemned by the Roman Church in 144 for his arbitrary re-arranging and emending of normative documents (he deleted portions of the gospel of Luke on the grounds that they were the product of later Judaizers, and repudiated the Old Testament altogether), his imaginative scholarship deserved a fair hearing. In fact, Marcion was heard very carefully,

and the formation of an inclusive canon was largely a reaction to him.²⁰

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in this regard is to discover and test out one's ability to hold to a final, absolute kind of revelation (as he perceives it) in a non-tyrannical or absolutistic manner. This is a hard balance to achieve in any age. Furthermore, Greenslade suggests that the temper of the times made it "natural" for an absolutistic attitude to accompany the idea of a final revelation,

The Christians of Roman times were not democrats, and their sense of corporate authority was much stronger than their respect for the individual conscience, so that by the end of the fourth century the Church sanctioned state coercion of heretics and schismatics.²¹

But be that as it may, it should be admitted that the development of the technical sense of heresy is predicated at least in part upon the conviction that the Christian revelation is a unique, unrepeatable, final event having ramifications for the whole created order animate and inanimate. Heresy thus becomes an offense of cosmic proportion, and the greatest of these offenses is that of treating the Revelation as though it were adiaphora, i.e., as a matter of indifference, something to be taken casually as if to say "nothing really has changed."

It is in this vein that Catholic theologian Karl Rahner makes his case for "The Christian Attitude Towards Heresy". He writes, "It

²⁰Robert M. Grant, A Historical Introduction To The New Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 27, 28, 29.

²¹S. L. Greenslade, Schism in the Early Church (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 33.

is only in Christianity that a certain quite definite and very radical attitude to truth is found. This is the source of a quite specific view of heresy and that is why heresy is only really found here."²² This attitude encompasses the awareness that revelation has occurred as definite event in space/time, and that truth itself, as such, is important for salvation.

We leave aside the question. . .whether and how the essential of the Christian message in fact reaches all men--even where the historical revelation cannot plainly be observed to come to them--from within, that is, through the offer of grace from God's universal salvific will, and in an implicit manner, without express formulation in propositions. Even if such be the case, it remains true, nevertheless, that this communication of truth from within which we are assuming to be granted and accepted, receives, in the Christian view, its full expression and definitively authentic conceptual expression, which also makes it unmistakable to the actual details of life, at quite definite places in historical space and time: through the prophets, through Jesus Christ, through the apostles, through authorized and appointed preachers and expounders of God's truth. He sends forth this truth to men as a free disclosure of his own nature and will. It is quite unattainable on a human basis.²³

From the above quotation, Rahner's case can be seen at least in sketch. For the Christian, a radical departure has occurred, initiated from an arbitrary source, which affects every concrete human situation. Christians may dispute who exactly is the bearer of that testimony to truth which occurred as an event, but no Christian concept of truth remains if that element is overlooked. Here Rahner's view of heresy

²²Karl Rahner, On Heresy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), p. 7. The Protestant reader might expect from this work a dogmatic reaffirmation of traditional Catholic authoritarianism, but if so he will be disappointed. The attitude is confessional and thoroughly contemporary.

²³Ibid., p. 8.

come into view. He asserts that mere difference of opinion over the content of the testimony cannot constitute heresy. Heresy happens only among persons who have the will to take this occurrence (the event of revelation) and the authority that manifests itself in it as their point of reference. The heretic agrees to all of this, but destroys, despite himself, the authentic and direct relation to that authoritative event.

Heresy is thus distinct from either schism or apostasy, since neither of these take the finality of the revelation event as their ultimate point of reference. Heresy involves a doctrine which, despite itself, threatens a whole spiritual existence, an existence based upon a reference to the one complete revelation occurrence which the heretic himself affirms.²⁴ It is in this light that the magnitude of the charge "heretic!" may be understood--as opposed, perhaps, to seeing the epithet as a sad example of institutional paranoia.

For Rahner then, heresy is more to be feared than open schism, though it should be noted that the latter is also a serious matter in the early Christian community. As the scholar Jerome wrote in a commentary on Titus 3:10, 11, "There is no schism which does not invent some heresy for itself in order to justify its departure from the Church."²⁵ Schism is not as serious, however as in the Jewish community where the threat to the familial or racial dimension of the cultic unity constituted the primary danger. Augustine is close to

²⁴Ibid., p. 9.

²⁵Cited by Greenslade, op. cit., p. 20.

this Jewish sense in De Fide et Symbolo where he writes, "Heretics violate the faith by thinking falsely about God, while schismatics break away from fraternal love by their wicked separations although they believe as we do."²⁶

To propose a summary of the discussion thus far, heresy may be seen as one point on a continuum running from a vivid appropriation of Rahner's revelation-event all the way to open dissension, break-away and schism which are replete with psychological and socio-political dynamics. These last will be the focus of discussion in chapter III of this investigation. In one sense heresy is itself the last point on the continuum, worse even than schism. But as Greenslade comments, "Most schisms raise serious theological issues, and there was no consistent usage which determined when a difference of opinion constituted a heresy rather than a schism."²⁷

One factor which may have been ignored in the discussion to this point is the fact that the literature of the heresies identified and condemned in the early Christian movement is not readily available or accessible to modern investigation. Hence, an unbiased assessment is not possible. Modern Christians cannot judge for themselves in a free and impartial manner the claims of the condemned movements. This is a particularly damaging admission when considered in light of Rahner's insistence upon a faithful, authentic relation to the primal revelation-event--because this relationship is precisely what many of the

²⁶Ibid., p. 19.

²⁷Ibid., p. 29.

"heretical" groups claimed as their reason for being. Yet their primary documents were destroyed by the triumphant orthodox bodies.

There are perhaps no more faithful champions of these lost and condemned movements than those scholars who embrace the methodology of the Comparative Religions school or "discipline." Such scholars abandon the reference to theological dimensions in historical research and focus on the purely secular, human origins of religion--often in a polemical style seeking to undermine the assumptions of a religious "Establishment Christianity". One of their contributions lies in their careful gathering of suppressed material, which now can allow a fairer assessment of the decisions of majority Christianity in its early stages.

Among the least prominent of these scholars, but the only one consulted for this study, is Francis Legge. Legge writes,

Until lately, it was a commonplace of religious history that the Catholic Church had destroyed as far as possible all traces of the religions that she had supplanted, which was picturesquely expressed in the phrase that in her victory she had burned the enemy's camp. That this was her conscious policy may be gathered from the advice given by a Pope of the VIIth century, to "break the idols and consecrate the temples" of the heathen; but of late many relics of the ancient faiths which had before escaped us have been disinterred by the care of scholars. During the last century, the lost heresiology of Hippolytus and considerable fragments of works by Gnostic authors were brought to light. . . .²⁸

An example of this is the fact that the only writings of Celsus available to us today are those which Origen (185-255A.D.) quotes for us in his Contra Celsus. This leaves us totally at the mercy of

²⁸ Francis Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity (New York: University Books, 1965) I. xxvii.

Origen's own selections and the accuracy of his quoting. This kind of admission forces Christians of later centuries to wonder: Is it possible that the condemned movements may have represented at some points a more faithful apprehension of the Christian revelation, and hence that the mere survival of the "orthodox" majority is not by itself a valid test? Indeed, it is possible that the fact of survival may indicate that the Church had "sold out" or capitulated in its theology to the expediency of majority opinion. Thus considered, politics more than theology would become the criterion for normative orthodoxy.

To venture an analogy out of political science, the systematic purges in the Soviet Union under Stalin separated out from the general populace those thinking persons whose integrity drove them to protest against the repressive measures of the regime. This "cream" of the society, many of them Jews, scientists, artists and intellectuals who saw Stalin as a paranoid peasant "killer of the Marxist-Leninist dream", were largely skimmed off as they arose. The apparatus of party officialdom, therefore, became dominated by men with a genius for cunning and survival--persons who would not scruple over the morality of Stalin's demands. This process so depleted the "soul" of Russia that it eliminated a whole generation of the finest leaders in the culture. It is possible out of this background to claim that for a leader to survive at all, signifies that he is automatically discredited.

This, of course, is to reverse the common legitimization of orthodoxy as "the guardian of the best themes and practices in the

tradition." When the Emperor Constantine gave the Church official, imperial backing, the contest over which faction of the Church should exercise the new power became acute. Heresy became criminal. In the reign of Theodosius II (382) it became a capital offense. A vast anxiety settled over the Christian community, full of pressure toward conformity, and nearly signaling the end of that fluidity which was perhaps the chief characteristic of earlier centuries. The firming up of doctrine at Nicaea, the first universal council of bishops, meant the invoking of "cloture" on some levels of theological discussion and debate. It also meant a graduation of Christianity out of some of its earlier bases among the lower classes; the faith had become more sophisticated, more intellectual. The vivid expectations of eschatology and second-coming became transplanted into their institutional and sacramental counterparts; thus, Bishops, the canon, and Augustine's De Civitate Dei--all of which signified that the Church was buckling down for the "long haul" of an erosive pilgrimage through history. To employ a poetic phrase, the faith had changed from "a leap into a walk."

Heresy, in this process, had changed from "violation of the ecclesia, punishable by reprimand or expulsion" to "an offense against the state religion, punishable by excommunication or death". Depending upon perspective, this development can be seen as (a) triumph of major proportion, signaling the rightful invasion of Christianity into every area of human life, (b) disaster of incalculable portent, signaling the triumph of secular and political ostentation and power over the spiritual simplicity and purity of the Apostolic Church, or (c) a

combination of these. Legge, who carries on polemics throughout his book against the exclusivism of orthodoxy, falls somewhere near (a):
 ". . . as most of us believe, the Christian religion has outdistanced and survived all its early competitors because it was better fitted than they to its environment".²⁹ This makes no value-judgment upon the phenomena, but at least it is positive.

There should also be other categories. Among them should be one for those who with splendid indifference look upon the agony of the first four centuries of Church history as a sad but somewhat amusing spectacle: "Those Christians, in the name of Love they cut each other to pieces." Looking over the long list of condemned movements, such an approach seems to have merit. John Henry Blunt lists thirteen heresies for the New Testament, and fifty-five for the period 120-306 A.D.³⁰ Even so he is behind Epiphanius (A.D. 303-403), heresiologist and Bishop of Constantia (Cyprus), who wrote a 1100-page work, Arcula, against 80 specific heresies. Philaster (circa. A.D. 380), Bishop of Brescia, lists 28 heresies before Christ and 128 after Christ in his work De Haeresibus.³¹ The question arises: With so much energy being spent on listing and condemning heresies, what was being affirmed in the interim? The ready answer, from a Catholic point of view, is that defending against heresy is affirmative at its base, and furthermore,

²⁹ Ibid., I, xxiii.

³⁰ John Henry Blunt, Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties, And Schools of Religious Thought (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1874).

³¹ Ibid., p. 185.

that the task of the episcopacy cannot be faithfully performed apart from this defensive or guiding function.

Even so, the irony of affirmative defensiveness can easily be sensed; perhaps it is evoked in the following comments from a Catholic work on Christian Sects. In a chapter on "Itinerant Salvationists" (among them Tommy Hicks, Billy Graham, and Oral Roberts), the author writes,

. . . their giant meetings and hordes of unorganized sympathizers show that they constitute a grave danger for the main Christian Churches, including the Catholic Church. These evangelists use typically American methods. In the last analysis, the result of their efforts is not union in the truth but a continually growing fragmentation of Christianity and increasing religious confusion among the masses in Christian countries and states whose leaders are apparently quite unconcerned about these things.³²

Such "unconcern" is understandable from outside the Christian movement. From inside, however, the very nature of ultimate truth is at stake--hence the terror over losing the treasure of faith through internal error. Some authors see the chief "concern" of or for the budding orthodoxy of the first four centuries as relating to the Person of Christ. Blunt, from his Church of England vantage point, writes,

All heresy, moreover, may be described as an answer more or less false to the question, "What think ye of Christ; whose Son is He?" for as the germ of the whole faith was contained in its first Divine proclamation from heaven, "Thou art My Beloved Son," so the correlation of all parts of the Creed is such that every form of heresy may be traced to some misbelief representing the Incarnate

³²Konrad Algermissen, Christian Sects (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), p. 125, underlining is mine.

Person of the Blessed Trinity. The earliest heretics . . . were those who endeavoured to depreciate the glory of Christ, by setting themselves up as rival claimants to a Divine mission.³³

Blunt has the irritating habit of making catholicity appear as if it were an easily determined, open-and-shut case, lacking that fluidity mentioned earlier in this investigation. His point, however, is nonetheless well-taken when the names of Simon Magus, Cerinthus, Manes, Samosata, Sabellius, and Arius are reviewed. Blunt argues that Magus claimed himself as the redeemer of the human race. Cerinthus, in trying to rationalize the mystery of the two natures-in-one-person, developed a Docetism which made it only appear that Christ suffered on the cross (actually, a phantom took his place). Manes, who claimed to be the Comforter promised by Christ, denied the transcendent dimension in Jesus. Paul of Samosata taught that the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" were only names, and without substantive reality. Arius denied that the Second Person of the Trinity is on an equal basis with the First; hence he was subordinate as man-among-men.³⁴

Ferdinand C. Baur, German pioneer in modern history of doctrine interprets the doctrinal development of the Early Church in light of Hegelian philosophy. He applies the framework of "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" to the gathered documents. Adolf Harnack, attempts to present the history of doctrine according to the theory that they are the product of the Hellenizing of the Gospel, i.e., that Greek secular and philosophical motifs invaded and powerfully influenced the

³³Blunt, op. cit., p. 188.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 188, 189.

primary Apostolic faith. These approaches seek to explain the phenomena of doctrinal development in a dispassionate, scholarly manner (similar to the form-critical approach to Biblical literature, also originating in Germany), as opposed to seeing everything in light of "The Church Triumphant" or some other theological or eschatological perspective.³⁵

Legge, in his comparative religions approach, takes evolutionary theory as a starting point for his discussion of doctrinal development, which is in effect to work out the implications of a biological analogy or "model" suggested by Darwin and Spencer.³⁶

All of these approaches may be of assistance and use, so long as the categories applied do not overtly or covertly violate the immense variety of original source material--and so long as the Church is not dismissed as adiaphora or without transcendent value on the basis of those categories. At least, this is the perspective of the investigator.

What is most remarkable about the early church is its incredible variety, the burst of imaginative interpretations and movements springing out of the Apostolic root--and the tenacity of those who sought to keep the primary impulse alive and fully operative as a cohesive guardian against the profusion and confusion of the day. In a very dynamic sense heresies are responsible for the survival of the Church

³⁵This paragraph is indebted to the summary of the "Literature of the History of Doctrines" in Reinhold Seeberg, Textbook of the History of Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), I, 25-27.

³⁶Legge, op. cit., p. vii., in an introduction by John Wilson.

as self-conscious entity; they forced Christians to think out the implications of that vital impulse which flowed from the Apostolic age. Heresies forced the dynamics of worship, emotion and fellowship to "incarnate themselves in the stability of theology". As John Leith puts it,

The creeds are signposts to heresies. . . . Yet it is a mistake to attribute creeds simply to heresy, for there would be creeds even if there were no heretics. . . . It may well be that the creeds, without the heretics, would not be as good as they are; for the heretics made their contributions. They required the Church to think through theological issues when it did not want to do so. They made the Church exercise care in theological language so that the language of theology would say what the Christian community wanted to say.³⁷

This may explain why in The Definition of Chalcedon (451), there is such economy of terms and sparseness of expression. "In spite of all the nontheological factors involved in the Christological controversies, the Church devoted its theological gifts to the problem with a singleness of interest that is hard to duplicate and with a catholicity that helped to keep the discussion in balance."³⁸

Heresy in the Medieval Period.

It is tempting to dismiss all post-Nicene deviations as simply variations on earlier themes which had already been condemned; thus Euthycianism (which maintained that Christ was God alone--a denial of the Incarnation) could be seen as based on the earlier disbelief of Arius, who also denied the Incarnation albeit from the opposite angle

³⁷John H. Leith, Creeds of the Churches (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), p. 9.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 35, 36.

(he denied the Divinity of Christ). Cross maintains that medieval heresies differ from ancient heresies mainly in that they were more ecclesiastical and practical than doctrinal, though doctrines of course were involved. He makes four relative divisions among them:

(i) Speculative heresies, or heresies based on a philosophical view of God and the world. These are akin to Gnosticism and Manichaeism and, in their asceticism, to Catholicism itself. (ii) Heresies of mysticism and 'Enthusiasm.' These arise out of supreme regard for the ecstatic experience and prophetism, and tend to pantheism. (iii) Anti-sacerdotal evangelical heresies, characterized, on the one side, by radical opposition to the hierarchy and the sacraments, and, on the other side, by a democratic Biblicism. (iv) Churchly evangelical heresies, which sought to reform Church from within without destroying its unity and continuity.³⁹

These divisions are reminiscent of heresy-categories invoked for every age, past and present; they do not appear to be strikingly "novel". Blunt lumps them all together as bearing out the prediction about wheat and tares growing together until harvest,

. . . the race of heretics cannot be expected to become extinct, though the capacity for inventing quite novel heresies seems long since to have been exhausted. The truths that were proved and the errors that were confuted twelve or fourteen hundred years ago, have to be proved and refuted over and over again through the ignorance and perverseness of those who are seduced by the pleasures of controversy, and the pages of the present volume bear witness to the multitudinous variety of forms in which a few main lines of heresy can be moulded.⁴⁰

Two comments are in order regarding Blunt's attitude: (1) his hostility seems over-done, tending toward the contention that diversity and novelty are ipso facto heretical, and (2) his dated perspective (1874) keeps him from anticipating those heresies common to a twentieth

³⁹Cross, op. cit., p. 619.

⁴⁰Blunt, op. cit., p. 190.

century techno-urban civilization. Certainly a degree of ingenuity and novelty must be granted to some of the uniquely American groups catalogued by John Krumm,⁴¹ Horton Davies,⁴² and Arthur Orrmont.⁴³ Even this last, however, is not likely to "top" in any substantive fashion the virulence of some very ancient heresies. For example, during the fourth-century reign of Theodosius, a Christian group in Spain called Agapetae practiced free-love, rejecting both marriage and fasting. This unrestrained sexual license and apparent gluttony they justified on the basis of Titus 1:15 "to the pure all things are pure" and I Timothy 4:3 in which are caricatured those who "enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." So troublesome was this movement, that St. Jerome wrote,

It is a shame even to allude to the true facts. Whence did the pest of the Agapetae creep into the Church? Whence is this new title of wives without marriage rites? Whence this new class of concubines? I will infer more. Whence these harlots cleaving to one man?⁴⁴

This, of course, was not a major movement requiring the concerted action of an ecumenical council. Likewise, there were many

⁴¹John Krumm, Modern Heresies (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1961).

⁴²Horton Davies, Christian Deviation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965). This work, subtitled The Challenge of the New Spiritual Movements, has chapters on Moral Re-armament, British-Israel, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science. The author commends "The way of encounter" as the orthodox response to these movements.

⁴³Arthur Orrmont, Love Cults and Faith Healers (New York: Ballantine Books, 1961).

⁴⁴Blunt, op. cit., p. 13.

other movements which only caused minor skirmishes. Blunt lists 52 heresies for the period 313-700 A.D., and 46 for the period 700 to the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Of these the following are of major note: the "cathari" such as Albigensians and Publicani; the Bogomils" or "Friends of God"; the "Amalricians" such as Beghards; the "Spiritual Franciscans" and "Joachimites"; the "humiliati" or "Poor men of Lombardy"; and "Waldenses" or "Poor men of Lyons"; the "Wyclifians" and "Hussites". Most of these movements arose out of simple protest against the arbitrary and elaborate structures of the Medieval Church; they represent a return to a more simple, flexible, private devotion.

In England, the situation pictured by Chaucer in his Canterbury Tales is one of the common people becoming contemptuous of a dissolute clergy and longing for a life of uncluttered devotion, simple piety. This condition set the stage for the leadership of John Wyclif, and by extension, for the Puritan reformation. Sometimes the hierarchy reacted with great pastoral constraint and patience, as is implicit in the founding of orders such as Benedictines, Dominicans and Franciscans. Such monastic orders were designed to preserve the structures of private devotion and uncluttered piety--without destroying or endangering the corporate unity of the Church. It is not unworthy of notation that Wyclif, who died in 1384, was not condemned as a heretic until the Council of Florence in 1428--although when the Church struck back it was with a vengeance: Wyclif's body was exhumed, burned, and thrown into the Severn.

At other times, the hierarchy reacted with an immense and

immediate fury against the threat of heresy, of which the Inquisition provides ample illustration; the Church became Judge, Jury and Executioner. The major articles of faith became a matter of unquestioned dogma, the private preserve of those whose immersion in the corporate disciplines of the organized institution guaranteed their "rightness". Conformity became tantamount to "right relation to God". To modern sensibilities influenced by what might be termed "shapeless religious toleration", such a development in the Church is without excuse--even worthy of basing thereon a complacent negation of every subsequent claim of the Church: What about the Inquisition, the Crusades, the Holy Wars? This insistent question is sometimes raised as if by itself it eliminates the possibility of rejoinder.

"Rejoinder" is possible, however, albeit in a confessional and discerning manner, a humble mood. The appeal can be made to extenuating socio-political circumstances, and to the repressive temperament of the feudal epoch in which the Church was deeply implicated. This investigator chooses rather to trace the problem primarily to a loss of the distinction between knowledge and belief, certainty and confident affirmation, vitality and form. In each of these polarities, the latter (chiefly because more obviously reliable and stable) gained predominance over the former. Thus faith was converted into an absolute legalism guarded over jealously, defensively, by the clerical power; one image for this is that the Dove (Holy Spirit) turned into a Vulture (Ecclesiasticism).

At any rate, western civilization is still reacting, often irrationally, to the mere suggestion of the thought-control which the

word heresy conjures up immediately. Among right-wing American Protestants the Pope is still often regarded literally as the embodiment of the Anti-Christ predicted in John's Apocalypse. Likewise, the National and World Council of Churches, along with all internationally attended ecumenical gatherings where doctrines are discussed, are suspected by some of renewed conspiracy toward mind-control reminiscent of the medieval period. If this contention is defensible, to wit that there is a direct link between the medieval repressions of the Church and the current reluctance about open theological discussion on an ecumenical level,--then a revolutionary re-education of the generalized Christian masses becomes incumbent upon every enlightened churchman.

First to go must be the frozen contention that the teaching authority of the Roman (or any other) communion is arbitrarily and eternally infallible. This contention shows signs of breaking up even more readily in Roman circles than in those sectarian circles where an equally troublesome "infallibility", namely Biblicism, is maintained. In the work by Algermissen on Christian Sects which was cited earlier, the "copyright page" has the following:

The Nihil obstat and Imprimatur are a declaration that a book or pamphlet is considered to be free from doctrinal or moral error. It is not implied that those who have granted the Nihil obstat and Imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.⁴⁵

The last sentence indicates a flexibility which has not always characterized the Roman Catholic Church. The days in which the clergy

⁴⁵As a Protestant observer, the investigator cannot judge the extent of the flexibility actually allowed or allowable under this rubric, or how far the openness can be stretched.

or the Church were expected to perform the overdependent function of doing the believing for the layman, of acting out his lagging certainties, are hopefully on the way out--to be replaced, not by an abandonment of belief, but by a vigorous faith-ful leaping into the issues and claims which have always been the troubling heritage of orthodoxy. Here the ancient Hebrew warning against every form of idolatry may be of service. M. Holmes Hartshorne writes,

The faith of Israel is . . . the prohibition against ascribing ultimacy to anything finite (including oneself), against putting one's ultimate trust in anything in the world. The chief function of religion, which is to win for men divine protection and blessing, the prophets judged for what it is: idolatry.⁴⁶

If this was actually the way it was for prophetic religion in Israel, it means that neither Pope, nor Teaching Office, nor Bible, nor private interpretation are fit subjects for the ascription of "ultimacy". This Hebrew proscription should not be too difficult to manage for persons who are aware of what the scientific revolution has done to the "arrogance of all human certitude". As H. Richard Niebuhr writes,

No other influence has affected twentieth century thought more deeply than the discovery of spatial and temporal relativity. The understanding that the spatio-temporal point of view of an observer enters into his knowledge of reality, so that no universal knowledge of things as they are in themselves is possible, so that all knowledge is conditioned by the standpoint of the knower. . . .⁴⁷

This constituted a major shock for all men, religious or not.

⁴⁶M. Holmes Hartshorne, The Faith To Doubt (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 5.

⁴⁷H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 7.

It may be worthy to note that the medieval synthesis of ecclesiastical power and the implied and functional arrogance of "final truth resident in Papal authority", came at a time when the astronomers taught that the earth provided the central axis for the whole universe. It was thus easy for cosmology, theology, and ecclesiology to get compressed into a very tight package. The result was the creation of a whole generation of churchmen having to bear the burden of a monstrous egocentrism sanctioned and expected by medieval orthodoxy. The reaction against Galileo (1564-1642), who confirmed the Copernican thesis, is to be expected, if not welcomed. Modern observers can well afford a discerning charity at this point; they are not likely saddled with the egocentric world view of that earlier day. Instead, as the investigator sees it, subtler versions now captivate us.

What is needed today is not only a rightful abhorrence of any attempts by the Church at forcing the conscience, but also a realistic appreciation for the basic intuition of the Church, to wit: doctrines relate, albeit imperfectly, back to primary events which are fully worthy of preservation in the conscious life of every Christian present. They are not simply the whimsical invention of dogmaticians; for better and for worse, they bear witness to an Ultimate claim. As Rahner, writing under the shadow of the Imprimatur, puts its,

. . . no formulation of the truths of faith in human words is ever adequate to the object referred to by them, and . . . any of them could be replaced by an even better, more comprehensive one. . . . But God's truth in human words is not, for all that, given merely in order to wander through the text books of dogmatic theology in printed propositions perpetually monotonous. It is intended rather for a vital encounter with the actual concrete individual, to penetrate into his mind and heart, become his very flesh and

blood, bring him into truth. That calls for a ceaselessly renewed assimilation by the individual. Just as he is, in his age, with his experiences, his lot, his intellectual situation.⁴⁸

Heresy since the Reformation.

At the end of his article on medieval heresies, Cross comments,

The story of Christian heresy properly closes with the Reformation. From the Catholic point of view, Protestantism is identical with heresy. And correctly so; for Protestantism stands for the prerogative of the individual. This is the root of all 'heresy'.⁴⁹

He then points out the "absurdity" of naming the most powerful segment of Christendom heretics. The category has been "de-fused"--even though it continues to be invoked by main-stream Protestantism (e.g., Luther and Calvin against the Anabaptists). The Invisible Church idea has become dominant, and no longer is excommunication necessarily equated with eternal damnation. "The charge of heresy is rapidly becoming meaningless."⁵⁰

This is not to say that the earlier dynamics are no longer operative, or that Christians no longer hold doctrines to be normative or binding. Rather, heresy has "gone out of style"; subtler and less obviously repressive pressure-techniques have been devised. Orthodoxy is no longer an independent entity with an ultimacy not to be questioned, but "a broadly fenced in area of thought and expression". In this context, heresy is still a dangerous phenomenon but the will to deal with it is somewhat blunted. The process has been "domesticated",

⁴⁸Rahner, op. cit., p. 60.

⁴⁹Cross, op. cit., p. 622.

⁵⁰Ibid.

softened. Krumm defines heresy as a movement which "takes up one single aspect of a many-sided truth and carries it too far."⁵¹

Instead of any clear sense of the limitations of faith, the modern scene witnesses a kind of churchly secularism, a pragmatic success-oriented attitude which (in a caricature by Krumm) is functionally "the practice of the absence of God."⁵² Rather than openly challenging the legitimacy of the doctrinal heritage, this attitude simply ignores the theological "bother" and plunged ahead on the practical level. An American example is Norman Vincent Peale. Whatever his long-term contribution, Peale preaches what Krumm terms "the positive thinking heresy--a refined form of primitive magic."⁵³ Or as Martin Marty somewhat more charitably sees him,

. . . Peale did help many people in the 1950's. In a world where any act of love is superior to an act of hate, where understanding is more to be sought than misunderstanding and restored relationships than broken ones, where hope is rare--in such a world Peale's achievement was not to be discounted. [But] He was speaking out of Protestantism with the gospel of positive thought denuded of Protestant substance.

And then Marty delivers his indictment:

Whenever questioners in his magazine columns pushed him to the wall concerning his attitude toward historic Christian teachings he affirmed them--and then dropped them from discussion. For historic Christian teachings have something particular and exclusive about them: every antagonist of the faith has known this. But the particular and the exclusive are not a tasty dish for mass consumption.⁵⁴

⁵¹Krumm, op. cit., pp. 21, 22.

⁵²Ibid., p. 38.

⁵³Ibid., p. 34.

⁵⁴Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 38.

Somehow the scandalon, the offense of the Gospel has been emasculated "out"--and chiefly that part of the gospel which has to do with the Incarnation. The inherent abrasiveness of the Passion Narrative has been lost so that "As the saying goes, in the olden days they stoned the prophets; now they invite them to dinner."⁵⁵ Particularity is lost through a process of "damnation by faith praise".

An almost complete reverse of this rather gloomy overview is taken by the Quaker Rufus Jones. For him the Reformation was a triumph of the human spirit, a watershed in which "The shackles and restraints on human thought were broken. The magic of tradition, authority and dogma was over."⁵⁶ The end of the medieval approach to "deviation" (heresy and the stake) signaled a new birth of freedom: "the dead hand of the past should no longer control human thought". Jones reveals himself with that word "dead", tending to romanticize the potentialities of the new freedom of post-reformation man.

As Jones sees it, the most significant change has been from forensic conceptions of salvation to vital, moral and spiritual conceptions of it.⁵⁷ Salvation has changed from a matter of external transaction with the Church, to "an inward process". Pursuing this perception, he cites all non-spiritual, mechanistic life-styles as the major current heresies.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 21.

⁵⁶Rufus Jones, The Church's Debt to Heretics (New York: Doran, 1924?), p. 243.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 251.

The outstanding heresy of our time is materialism, a theory of the universe which eliminates significance, values, purpose, freedom, personal initiative, the reality of the soul, the transcendence of Spirit, man's communion and fellowship with a Great Companion.⁵⁸

With apologies for the reductionistic idealism of this passage-- and the "chummy" offense to the doctrine of God--Jones needs to be seen in the light of the persecutions which have dogged the Quaker movement from its English inception down to the present. George Fox spent a great deal of time in dungeon. In 1656 the American Colony of Massachusetts enacted a law which provided that all Quakers be immediately thrown into prison, whipped with twenty stripes, and kept at hard labor until banished--four were hanged between 1659 and 1661.⁵⁹ The recent voyage of the mercy ship Phoenix to North Vietnam has brought down fanatic reaction and demands for reprisal. Thus considered, Jones' casual approach to orthodoxy can be understood, if not defended.

From the investigator's point of view, Quaker casualness about doctrine has a quite different character about it than do other more secular manifestations. In general, Quakers are not reluctant to acknowledge their indebtedness to the historic churches, and they do not seem to merit the charge of "indifferentism" which Rahner sees as an underground or latent heresy. Ideas are important, certainly, but even more important (for the Quaker) is how those ideas get incarnated into human action. If, for example, a person's doctrine of God

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 253.

⁵⁹A discussion of the Quaker fortunes in America and England is offered in Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1960), p. 111.

reinforces his persecution of opponents, then something may be amiss both with the doctrine and with the person who is "applying" it. The latter view has more currency among the orthodox. Quakers can be particularly acute in discerning the heresy of which Rahner speaks in the following:

Who could deny that even at the present time the form of heresy exists in which lifeless orthodoxy is only the effect and expression of an inner indifference to truth, by which something is left alone because it is at bottom so much a matter of indifference that people even shrink from the trouble of clearing it out of the way or contesting it?⁶⁰

Both the Quakers (such as Jones) and Catholics (such as Rahner) will agree that persecution can be as easily based upon a theological neutrality as it can upon the most dogmatic of orthodoxies. Repression is not the private sin of those who defend the faith. Witness the materialist atheism of decadent Marxists. A deeper problem persists, namely the relation between truth and charity.

The New Testament image of wheat and tares together may be useful at this point. There is no implication in this image that a "harvest" is not forthcoming, or that the ideas implicit and explicit in the human community are of no permanent consequence. Davies is also helpful where he speaks of "The way of Encounter" as the rightful approach to those deviant movements who are outside the orthodox pale. He says, "We are all members of the same convoy of Christians traversing the stormy waters of the present."⁶¹ Even so, he is quick to warn

⁶⁰Rahner, op. cit., p. 61.

⁶¹Davies, op. cit., p. 136. He calls these persons "Christians in intention".

against a kind of "cordial ambiguity" which would fall prey to doctrinal relativism. His model for orthodoxy is that of guardians of a treasure whose best function is to give it away, spending rather than hoarding it: "our new friends have need of it as we did".⁶²

This is not the "ecumenicity of mutual impoverishment" (which some have charged against the Faith and Order deliberations),⁶³ but a mutuality of cross-stimulation such as can be witnessed under the auspices of the Catholic Order of St. Benedict (founded in 529). This order has welcomed and hosted theological conferences and seminars of the most un-Catholic groups, and though thoroughly monastic (Stability, Obedience to the Prior, Conversion of life-style), it sends out monks into dialogue with the community-at-large.⁶⁴

Among Protestants, the Consultation on Church Union shares this openness:

⁶²Ibid., p. 127.

⁶³This possibility is warned against by Jaroslav Pelikan, Yale church historian, in Newsweek, (February 5, 1968), 83.

⁶⁴The Benedictine monastery at Valyermo, California (St. Andrew's Priory) was founded in 1956 after the order had been expelled from China. Thirty brothers make up the community. The present dissertation is being completed while the investigator is in residence. The openness is apparent from the stream of Jews, Catholics and Protestants who are periodic guests. A B'nai B'rith group was hosted in February, 1969.

A qualification is in order, The positive appraisal of the Benedictine order is prejudiced by this one experience. The "openness" may not be characteristic of the entire order.

[The united church] will constantly remind itself of the divisive dangers in verbal confessions and intellectual formulations, and of the need to keep open and continuous the theological dialogue within which the Church grasps the riches which are in Jesus Christ.⁶⁵

And then, specifically addressing the problem of orthodox limitation, the report continues,

The united church agrees to the continued use of these [covenants and confessions of member churches] by units of the church, as positive enrichments to its own understanding of the Gospel. It will not, however, permit the use of any single confession as an exclusive requirement for all or as a basis for divisions within the new community.⁶⁶

It is not immediately clear what this last paragraph does to the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) who have from the beginning boasted "No creed but Christ"; it is clear, however, that both the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds will be held normative. The approach to the dangers of heresy is alluded in the following:

It is the scriptures which warn against literalism and legalism in the formulation of doctrine, against the use of verbal formulas to divide the Church or exclude sincere followers of Jesus Christ. It is they which also protest against indifference to doctrine, and against identifying as 'faith' a minimum of beliefs, reached by compromise and designed to relax the requirements of discipleship.⁶⁷

With the exception of that slippery word "sincere" (no one seriously questions the sincerity of Torquemada, Hitler, or of Joseph McCarthy-- it is their ethics and theology which are calamitous), the passage appears attractive enough. The main point follows:

⁶⁵Consultation on Church Union (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1967), p. 32.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 32.

The apostolic testimony is to be guarded not as by watchdogs or hunters, but by pastors and shepherds, wholly devoted to the gospel of forgiveness and willing to give their own lives for the sake of Christ's flock.⁶⁸

In other words, the model is not that of McCarthy-type heresy-hunters let loose in the Church, nor is it that of an ecclesiastical counterpart to the House Un-American Activities Committee. Rather, the model is one of Pastoral oversight.

Heresy is not dead, but sleeping.

The chapter begins with heresy in the innocence of its Jewish origination. It explains why the term did not, and has not, hardened up in Judaism as it has in Christianity, and suggests why this was a necessary consequence of the Christian approach to revelation-as-event.

It then moves to the chaotic period of the early Church, when it became incumbent upon the thinking faithful to formulate some theological norms which could spare the Christian impulse from being swallowed by its cultural competition. This process is climaxed after the Edict of Toleration under Constantine, when in 382 the persecuted movement gained the power of Imperial backing. The chief contention during this period was over the Nature of Christ, at least tentatively resolved with the Nicene creed and the condemnation of Arius.

The third section dealt with those heresies which refused to die in the medieval period, being increasingly tied up with protests against the now-powerful ecclesiastical majority. It is in this period that the category heresy gains its most frightful connotations,

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 32, 33.

forcing into the background those reforming protests which exploded later in the Reformation. The close alliance between Church and State helped to create a legitimation for theological repression and persecution.

The fourth section took up the perspectives on heresy which have been extant since the Reformation. Chief among these are the views which see heresy as having been repressed out of modern Christendom, driven into a latent or underground state. Particularly troublesome is the doctrinal indifferentism of persons who regard themselves as "beyond" the possibly repressive need for belief. The tension is a vital one, between the affirmation of some normative belief structure on the one hand, and the fear of the insensitivities of a former era on the other. The way ahead is sketched by those ecumenical gestures which see no contradiction between belief and charity, but are able to "speak the truth in love".

CHAPTER III

NON-THEOLOGICAL DYNAMICS UNDERLYING HERESY PROCEEDINGS

This chapter will focus on those secular factors which are operative behind the overt theological clashing of heresy proceedings. The contention of the chapter is that such non-theological dynamics are often more responsible for heresies and schisms (and for the response of the Magisterium as well) than are the more obvious doctrinal issues which are "at stake". To venture a pun, the issue is not so much between which goes to the stake--the heretic or the doctrine which he challenges--as it is between one power-structure (the Church) and another (the challenger).

Socio-political dynamics of heresy.

Beginning perhaps with James and John vying for favored positions in Jesus' heavenly court, (Matthew 20:20-28), the Church has witnessed a long history of such jockeying-for-position in which the "prize" is the security or approval granted by the ecclesiastical power structure of the day. This dynamic is observable on a purely sociological plane as the Christian community "graduates" out of the lower classes in the Apostolic era into the majority status conferred under Constantine. From the relative simplicity of house-churches and fishermen, the community was propelled into the prestigious world of philosophy and state-sanctioned religious establishment in a space of four centuries. For simple folk, this must have been a distinct source of bewilderment; for the unscrupulous, it was a field-day.

Faith, and not reasonableness, was the quality most sought after under Apostolic leadership, and Celsus may have had it right when he wrote (according to Origen's reporting) that the rule of admission into the infant Church was,

Let no educated man enter, no wise man, no prudent man, for such things we deem evil; but whoever is simple, let him come and be welcome.¹

According to this state of mind, the expectation of the immediate return of Christ overwhelmed all "lesser" considerations. The password Maran atha ("even so, come quickly Lord Jesus") was a decisive key to the Christian fellowship. That is to say, though there were definite forms of discipline and liturgy from the earliest days, the predominant mood was not speculative or philosophical, but "existential", expectant, and often anti-intellectual. It is little wonder that reform-minded movements in every subsequent period of Church history have yearned idealistically for the illusive purity and simplicity of the Apostolic age--sometimes referring to it as "the age of illumination".

With this as background it is not difficult to sense with appreciation the hostility and suspicion among simple believers (reminiscent of American "Bible-believing Christians") which developed as theologians cast the faith into an ever more philosophical frame of reference. The Christian hope was being girded for the long struggle of post-parousia competition in a corrosive world, and it was natural

¹Francis Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity (New York: University Books, 1965), I, xxvi. Quote is from Origen's Contra Celsus.

that grave suspicion should arise among believers whose simpler "world" was being replaced. Hence it can be observed that among the condemned movements (heresies and sects) the more emotional, enthusiastic elements predominate--providing attractive refuge from the anxieties of thinking through the philosophical implications of The Christ Event.

Chief among these early forms of "refuge" was Gnosticism, a movement which rivalled Christian thought with its emphasis upon secret knowledge (gnosis) which can be cultivated through cultic mystery ceremonies. This movement lacked the inner corrective of open discussion and argumentation (it was "private" and secretive), and like some forms of oriental mysticism tended to down-play the strictly historical dimensions of the faith. It is in view of this anti-historical predisposition that the Apostles' Creed can be understood as it reacts with the bluntly historical note, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried".

Other examples of sociological factors shaping the course of Church history can be seen as parties vie for power after Constantine ended the persecution of Christians within the Roman Empire.

The struggle against Arianism was not merely a struggle for orthodoxy, [but] Athanasius was really at the head of a national Greek party resisting the domination of a Latin speaking court, [so that] from this time onwards Greek patriotism and Greek orthodoxy became almost convertible terms.²

Or, to shift ahead one millenium to the Protestant Reformation, there can be observed a close relationship between German nationalism

²"Orthodox Eastern Church", Encyclopedia Britannica (11th ed.) XX, 337, cited by H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1954), p. 113.

and Luther's protest. Ernst Troeltsch, that great sociologist of religion, wrote that Protestants,

accepted the Roman idea of a church co-extensive with the state, but defining the state in nationalist terms and rejecting the hierarchy, they subordinated religion to politics and accepted in place of papal sovereignty the rule of a divinely appointed King or of a political parliament chosen by that new voice of God--popular opinion.³

The sociological dynamic can also be observed in the overwhelming public response visited upon Luther's mention of the relation between Antichrist imagery and the abuses of the Popes. He had touched a sore-point of immense significance, and without really intending to do so.

Whereas they the public identified particular popes, because of their evil lives, with Antichrist, Luther held that every pope was Antichrist even though personally exemplary, because Antichrist is collective: an institution, the papacy, a system which corrupts the truth of Christ. That was why Luther could repeatedly address Leo X in terms of personal respect only a week or so after blasting him as Antichrist. . . . On the eve of the Leipzig debate Luther was frightened by his own thoughts.⁴

Luther rightly feared the possibility of an irrational public reaction against Rome which would make use of his opinions for the purposes of political revolt. He feared the very kind of phenomenon which later took place under the leadership of Thomas Muntzer and the Peasant Revolt. This is not to deny the political dimensions of Luther's thinking, but to point out that the proportions and correctives built into that thinking were lost--swallowed up by propaganda and social revolution.

³Niebuhr, Ibid., p. 122.

⁴Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1955), p. 84.

A modern American example of the sociology of heresy is offered within the Protestant Episcopal communion by the case of Bishop James A. Pike versus socially conservative Episcopal brethren. There is evidence to suggest that Pike's stand on civil rights, chiefly his refusal to take an honorary degree "in white divinity" from segregationist Sewanee College, has been of more concern to the attacking Bishops than the doctrinal denials which are more overtly responsible. That is to say that Pike's ready affirmation of his view of the Christian doctrine of man (that the gospel confers equal status as sinners to men of all colors everywhere), was more offensive than his talk about the Trinity as "excess baggage"--although the latter became the issue in the heresy presentment. As Stringfellow and Towne write in a chapter on "Social Radicalism and Heresy",

In the days of the Inquisition, heresy charges were sometimes used to cover the pursuit, persecution, and condemnation of those whose nonconformity was, in reality, political, social, or ideological rather than doctrinal, dogmatic or theological.

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It may well be that what has now so roused controversy around Bishop Pike is not any substantive radicality in his opinions, whether theological or social (if, biblically speaking, there be any admissible distinction between the two) but, rather, that Bishop Pike's mind remains restlessly, enthusiastically, and abrasively radical: acceptive of challenges, free to listen to other insights, appreciative of new data, inclined to embrace change; questing, inquiring, wondering, possessed of awe.⁵

Their point is well taken. The heresy charges are related, even if not immediately, to the social conservatism of the American

⁵William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, The Bishop Pike Affair (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 162, 163.

political far-right. This is clear from the supportive mail received by Bishop Loutitt after his presentment. "So today I praise the Lord for men such as yourself, and Carl McIntire, Billy James Hargis, and many others. . . ." ⁶

Neibuhr confirms this basic assumption where he writes of the process by which socio-political opinions become rationalized into an "orthodox" doctrinal framework.

It is not possible to reduce all religious opinions and ideas to the category of rationalization, that is, to explain them as results of the universal tendency to find respectable reasons for a practice desired from motives quite independent of the reasons urged. Yet an evident illustration of this relationship or ideas to underlying social conditions may be found in the attitude of Christians toward such institutions as private property, democracy, and slavery. . . . Only the purest novice in history will seek the explanation of such opinions in the proof-texts from which they purport to derive. ⁷

The psychology of heresy.

The literature of theological controversy abounds with the caricature of the heretic as a perverse individualist, afflicted with a megalomaniacal over-confidence in his own opinions. The assumption seems to be that the heretic is engaging in a very dangerous kind of ecclesiastical capitalism which threatens the socialistic economy of the mother institution. In this light, the heretic refuses to "do" his capitalism within the structures (such as the Catholic monastic orders) provided for such diversity, and hence must be dealt with as an insolent child who has not learned "his place".

⁶Ibid., p. 168.

⁷Niebuhr, op. cit., pp. 14, 15. Underlining is mine.

Eastern Orthodoxy seems to evidence greater respect than do Western Churches for this ostensibly arrogant manifestation of the need to "do your own thing", particularly if such charismata is not intended to generate a schismatic following. Writing in his overview of The Orthodox Church, Timothy Ware notes,

Folly for the sake of Christ is a form of sanctity found in Byzantium, but particularly prominent in medieval Russia: the 'Fool' carries the ideal of self-stripping and humiliation to its furthest extent, by renouncing all intellectual gifts, all forms of earthly wisdom, and by voluntarily taking upon himself the Cross of madness. These Fools often performed a valuable social role: simply because they were fools, they could criticize those in power with a frankness which no one else dared to employ. So it was with Basil, [died 1522] the 'living conscience' of the Tsar. Ivan listened to the shrewd censure of the Fool, and so far from punishing him, treated him with marked honour.⁸

To allow this kind of wild diversity has been a more difficult problem for the West, where charismata has often led to schisma. Somehow the East has been able, perhaps through the richness of its liturgical awareness of the "irrational element" in religion, to allow and even encourage eccentric Christian behavior. In the West, however, the ideas of Pelagius (works righteousness rather than justification by faith) become the movement of Pelagianism, and the ideas of Donatus (the validity of the sacraments is dependent upon the character and integrity of the priest) become Donatism--and thus the Church is rent by rival sub-groupings. And this seems to happen despite the fact that these movements have vital insights to contribute

Pelagius, for example, was concerned lest the gift of faith be

⁸ Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 118.

construed as license for laziness, and Donatus was concerned about the legitimacy of priests who had "lapsed" (i.e., "sold out") under pressure of persecution. The priests in question had allegedly violated their express vows of ordination by giving up the Church's books for burning, hence prompting the catchword of the Donatists: "He who does not possess the thing to be given, how does he give it?"⁹ For post-World War II Christians who witnessed the tragic acquiescence of both Catholic and Protestant clergymen during the Nazi exportation of Jews this issue continues to ring with an alarming pertinence.

And yet, both Donatus and Pelagius were condemned, along with the magnificent Origen with his Hexapla and ascetic devotion to the Church (he castrated himself to rid his studies of sexual distraction). From the distance of a modern perspective, it would seem that the Church corporate has heaped coals of fire upon its best allies, particularly upon those who have had the courage to make their opinions publicly available. It is of some help to recognize that many of the heretics were extremely aggressive in seeking a following for their opinions, and quite undialogical in their promotion of them.

Another aspect of the psychology of heresy is that which might be termed "the revolt into idealistic enthusiasm." Here the retreat is away from the cold realities of history into the warmer securities of cultic emotion. Thus the second century witnesses the phenomenal following behind Montanus with his asceticism and his suspicions of

⁹ S. L. Greenslade, Schism in the Early Church (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 172.

rationality. Montanus rejected marriage and engaged in ecstatic prophecies for which he claimed the sanction of the Holy Spirit, and held his revelations to be superior to those of the Apostolic age. Eusebius writes of him,

Montanus, in the excessive desire of his soul to take the lead, gave the adversary occasion against himself, so that he was carried away in the spirit, and wrought up into a kind of frenzy and irregular ecstasy, raving, and speaking, and uttering strange things.¹⁰

The problem with this kind of enthusiasm is that it becomes a law unto itself, holding itself aloof from the correctives of the larger fellowship which may not experience prophetic ecstasies. Furthermore, the intuition of the more orthodox streams of Church opinion is that in the final analysis "history, with all its exigencies, must be faced as the legitimate arena of God's action". This means that marriage cannot finally be rejected among the entire Christian fellowship--because that would seal and determine its extinction and the world would be left without the leaven and salt of the Christian witness.

To make this judgment of Montanus is not necessarily to condemn mysticism as a whole, since the great mystics such as John of the Cross and St. Francis of Assisi were careful to retain the utter realism of the "life of the world." This can be maintained despite the comment

¹⁰ John Henry Blunt, (ed.) Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties and Schools of Religious Thought, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1874), p. 337.

that "Mysticism begins in 'mist' and ends in 'schism'".¹¹ Where mysticism becomes one-sided, absolutistic, and hostile to the corporate authority of the whole Christian fellowship, this comment may be born out.¹² But certainly these are not the classic contributions of mysticism.

Mysticism may, however, offer an attractive refuge for persons put off by the apparent massive indifference, impersonalism, of a Church which has secured its place in the society. This dynamic can be seen at work in pre-reformation England, where the unavailability of the scriptures to the laity, the perfunctory character of confession and absolution, and the unavailability of direct access to the authority-center of the Church (the Popes could not make frequent trips) contributed to a sense of "legislated religion." In psychological terms, where the doors to full participation in the growing centers of the cult are closed, where the ritual forms are held back from the recreating appropriations of the community ("hands off: the Bible and the Mass in no sense belong to you"), there the natural reaction will be to search for a warmer "home". Hence, in England, there was an immense swell of support for John Wyclif. And later on there came the revolt into the privatism of Puritan Biblicistic

¹¹John Krumm, Modern Heresies (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1961), p. 17.

¹²Thus the Fraticelli of "Little Brethren" of fourteenth-century Italy, Franciscans given to fanaticism and poverty, were suppressed for heresy, and resisting, fled to Sicily.

devotion, with popes and bishops regarding as stooges and "papists", and the Bible as the only reliable guide.

In modern America this revolt against the arbitrary exclusion of laymen (including women, long excluded from the priesthood) from a formative role in the development of doctrine and liturgy can be seen at work behind the popularity of Bishop Pike. Pike openly solicits the feed-back of the "common people", and has been roundly censured for his pains:

The issue of the little people--presumably the ordinary church-going faithful--has frequently been raised by bishops who are critical of Pike's public comments. Thus, . . . a bishop said to him: "Look, Jim, we know what you've been saying is true, but you can't tell the little people that."¹³

The assumption here, and a very common one in Church history, is that with the Apostle Paul the people cannot "handle" the "meat" and hence must be given "milk"--until, presumably, the common people are ready. This requires a pastoral decision, an assessment of the spiritual flexibility and responsiveness of the flock. At any rate, Bishop Pike in his rejoinder openly resisted this condescending paternalism:

Bishop Pike responded that, on the one hand, truth was truth and could not be made different for big people and little people, and, on the other hand, he didn't think the little people were all that little anyway. He pointed out that, as a result of education and mass communications and other modern phenomena, the little people were getting less little all the time, and knew, in fact, much more than some big people thought. He implied that he thought the little people would grow even bigger if the already big people would be more candid with them.¹⁴

¹³Stringfellow, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁴Ibid. The authors appear ready to admit that at some times Pike's readiness to "shoot from the lip" in utter candor can be troublesome, but they stand with Pike in his empathy with the "little people".

One further aspect of this resistance to the exclusion of the "little people" is the historic practice of withholding the eucharistic cup from the laity on the grounds that they might "spill it", and thus sully or violate the Blood of Christ. The power of the reaction again against this practice can be seen in the almost universal Protestant manner of serving communion in "both kinds". The reverse of this, of course, is the contention that Protestants generally lack the "respectful adoration of the elements" which has for centuries been the liturgical expectation: they have "domesticated" the eucharist into a one-dimensional "coke and candy bar" innuocuity. To the investigator, both extremes seem unbalanced.

Closely related to idealistic anthusiasm are the psychological dynamics of simplistic perfectionism, a category which may describe the naive idealization of the New Testament Church and the wish to return to it. According to this view of "yearning", the natural developments of Church history, such as the papacy, the elaboration of liturgies, the development of doctrinal standards, are dismissed as accretions and distortions of the simple New Testament "stock". Faith is basically a simple affair of the heart. This approach is almost seen among illiterate members of the Eastern Orthodox Churches--although unaccompanied by a rejection of the Church in its corporate manifestations--where the Jesus Prayer is a universal practice: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner".¹⁵ It is more clearly seen among revivalist

¹⁵Ware, op. cit., p. 313. The author explains how this prayer becomes so "visceral" that it "recites itself".

Protestant groups in America, among whom the idealization of early Christianity is often tied up with comparable naivete about the founding of America.

Often such simplism can be seen, and without malice, as definitely pathological, a full-scale retreat from contemporary responsibility. A living illustration of the pathology of heresy is offered by an Episcopal priest, retired, who seems to aspire to the role of Torquemada for his communion--chiefly in the burning of Bishop Pike. This man systematically writes venomous doggerel invective against Pike and sends it unsolicited through the mails:

This news I think you will not like
But you shall have it, bishop pike
For many years the world has heard
Your dissertations and your words
On subjects all-though like as not
The things you say are simply rot
High sounding yes, but meaning dense
And lacking quite in common sense
And now at last you have your due
The whole world is sick of you.

Your fame's a very shoddy fame
We're wearied of your very name
Your photograph, your noxious face
A crowding good newspaper space
The world is sick as it can be
Of you and of your blasphemy
We're sick up to our necks
With all your heresy and sex
We're patient, but you've burst the dyke [sic]
We're soul sick of you bishop pike.¹⁶

The fundamental irony of this kind of phenomenon is that there is no real question about the doctrinal orthodoxy of Torquemada, the

¹⁶Stringfellow, op. cit., p. 31. This man was licensed to officiate as a priest in Arizona by Bishop John Harte, and hence cannot be dismissed lightly as a senile crank.

above "poet", or (for another example) the attackers of Harry Emerson Fosdick. On the level of visceral orthodoxy, however, there seems to be something gravely amiss--particularly with regard to the norms about judgment-with-forgiveness within the Christian fellowship. This dimension of a healthy ecclesiology (namely, forgiveness) is totally missing. The aforementioned "poet" on the occasion of the death by suicide of Pike's son Jim, dispatched the following condolence: "Thank God for one less pike."¹⁷ Again, the issue is more likely one of pathology than it is one of theology.

This kind of manifest inner disease may be related to a crisis of authority, to a frantic attempt at defending a series of conjectures-frozen-into-dogma. Such frozen belief-systems somehow manage to become the basis for an enormous emotional investment, so much as that a challenge of the system strikes at the very heart of the believer's self-regard. When this happens, the very sanity of the believer comes to severe test whenever there is open discussion of the legitimacy of his center of authority. To some extent this kind of crisis can be regarded as an aspect which affects every current revolution. Whenever a particular Authority seems endangered by collapse, the psyche mobilizes (1) to destroy, emasculate or otherwise repel the source of threat, or (2) seek a deeper, more reliable focus of Authority as replacement. The "Torquemada complex" is unable to hold its Authority center in any kind of dynamic suspension, and hence is driven to mobilize in the first manner. For this approach, faith is static, once-for-

¹⁷Ibid. Notice the lack of capitalization for the Bishop's name.

all--and to question it at any level is dynamically speaking to assault the very throne of God.

Bishop Pike addresses himself to this authority crisis in his manifesto of faith which he dedicates in part to "the little people". After citing examples of the quiet collapse of authority, all the way from the distrust of the United States Supreme Court to the slippage away from Catholic rigidity on birth control Pike moves in to discuss the traditional authorities upon which Church doctrines have been based. These are the Bible, the ecumenical councils of the Church, the creeds, denominational confessions of faith, liturgies, and (as with the Quakers) consensus regarding belief. He then carefully demonstrates how through internal contradictions, each of these bases of authoritative doctrine is unworthy of the finality of infallibility or ultimacy. It is noteworthy that in spite of his attack on "infallible doctrines," Pike never does eliminate doctrinal norms as explicit adiaphora, matters of indifference.

On the formation of the Biblical canon, for example, he writes,

Without belief in the infallibility of the Catholic Church or of certain officials within it, how can it be asserted that the Bishop of Hippo and the hermit and papal secretary Jerome and many others of the patristic and early medieval periods who shared in the selection process knew for certain which of the various editors and authors of holy writings were infallible? On what other basis could there be attributed to one or all of these particular writers the gift of inerrancy as compared with other writers in the Hebrew tradition--or for that matter, writers on religious topics in other human cultures?¹⁸

And then comes the punch-line, offered in good courtroom style:

¹⁸James A. Pike, If This Be Heresy (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 48.

In answer, the dogma that the Jews were the Chosen People, God's unique channel of revelation would be asserted. But where does that doctrine come from? From the scriptures. Circular reasoning again.¹⁹

He then proceeds in similar fashion with the other bases of authority in the Church. On the councils, he denies their ecumenicity ("formulation without representation") and their basic assumption that majority opinion is tantamount to revelation from God. Quoting the classic definition of "catholicity" (St. Vincent of Lerins: "that which has been held always, everywhere, and by all") he writes, "there never was such a Church; nor was there ever universal acceptance of anything."²⁰

That is probably an overstatement, even of Pike's own more studied position on the authority of the Church. Unless he accepts the wildest of the heresies as subsumed under the category "universal", he would have to admit that the primacy of Jesus as Lord of the Church was a universal norm among Christians.

On the creeds he writes,

. . . the Creeds do not stand on their own feet as a basis of authority. And if one or the other did, it would require some basic norm to decide that one or two are to be accepted, and one or two not accepted, since none of them is found in the primitive Church, all arose in the same later period, and none in toto came into being by official conciliar decree.²¹

In this manner Pike seeks to undermine the intellectual bases upon which an infallibility is based, thereby hoping to clear the way for a faith-stance which, without surrendering the joy of its affirmation, can still be aware of its limitation--and remain open to the

²⁰Ibid., p. 57.

²¹Ibid., p. 65.

corrective of new primary data. It still remains, however, for Pike to deal with the fact that for many Christians faith is not rational or intellectual at all; doctrines are functionally immaterial, despite fervent denials. Doctrines are functionally, dynamically operative for the believer in direct inverse proportion to his defensive protectiveness of those doctrines. That is to say, orthodoxy in the full Christian meaning of that term provides its own defense; it argues in the most persuasive fashion without any public relations techniques whatever.

To think of this kind of orthodoxy in terms of setting up a norm for Christians is, however, to engage in idealism (tinged with hostility, perhaps) with regard to the realistic situation of initiates or catechumens. With the Apostle Paul, the "milk" may have to be dispensed in the form of ready-made belief-systems to be reiterated like the Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer as one stage in the growth toward actual, substantive orthodoxy. And until this latter stage is reached, the danger is implicit that the beliefs may be transposed into battering rams, thought-terminators,--which constitute the clearest denial of the vital orthodoxy beneath them.

In sum, the Church's proclamation of normative theology runs the inherent risk of being diverted into a pathological substitution of assensus (assent) for fiducia (trust). Yet it seems too much to expect that the Church should somehow enable catechumens to leap past this ready-made stage without first grappling with a normative theology. Nor should the Church be expected to abandon a doctrinal relationship altogether. Provision should be made, however, for the kind of

anxiety-producing creative independence of the likes of Origen, Peter Abelard, John Wesley, and even Pike, because in the long run their devotion to the Church is of more value than that of a thousand Torquemadas. Or as Luther said it in his response to Eck's query: "Are you the only one that knows anything? Except for you is all the Church in error?":

I answer that God once spoke through the mouth of an ass. I will tell you straight what I think. I am a Christian theologian; and I am bound, not only to assert, but to defend the truth with my blood and death. I want to believe freely and be a slave to the authority of no one, whether council, university, or pope. I will confidently confess what appears to me to be true, whether it has been asserted by a Catholic or a heretic, whether it has been approved or reproved by a council.²²

Meanwhile, if the magisterium responds with expulsion and repressive measures such as were visited upon Luther, the phenomenon can be understood (at least in part) as the institutional counterpart of the pathology of heresy, i.e., the Church is reacting instinctively, irrationally, to a threat. There is a wild boar loose in the vineyard, a parasite in the Body of Christ--these in the persons of a Lorenzo Valla (who discovered that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery) or Martin Luther (who discovered that the primacy of Rome was a retro-active fiction). The inherent conservatism of institutions makes it understandable why there is preference for settled, even closed questions over the more anxiety-producing open ones. As William Buckley noted in commenting on the Papal Encyclical on birth control, "What happened was that the question of artificial means of preventing

²²Bainton, op. cit., pp. 91, 92.

conception gradually sprung open with the Church, and once a question becomes open, a certain licentiousness follows which is almost impossible to suppress thereafter."²³

Still another way of seeing the psychodynamics of heresy is in terms of the outsider mentality, the minority opinion which demands a share of the corporate power. Sociologically speaking this can be seen as a "revolution of rising expectations" within the Church, comparable to the "Third World" nationalistic spirit of contemporary Africa/Asia, and within the United States, Black Power. Translated, this spirit can be seen at work in the medieval protests against the ostentation and wealth of the popes: How can you live and parade yourself in comfort when Our Lord commanded the humility of a servant life? In this frame of reference, dissent (which may take theological form) can be seen as the attempt to "break open an issue and riddle it with light."²⁴

In such cases the magisterium may react with a whole series of subtle pressures, cajoling, bribing, or threatening in hopes of heading off a heresy proceeding. These subtle pressures are counterparts, different only in degree, of the more overtly embarrassing bother of a formal trial. Lefferts Loetscher, a historian of the Presbyterian Church writes of a report from a conservative rally in Philadelphia:

²³This is a paraphrase of a comment shared by Buckley while he was a guest on the Merv Griffin Show, New York City, during the Fall of 1968.

²⁴This comment was a favorite of Socialist Norman Thomas, a fervent believer in the right of civil disobedience.

[it] contained an interesting reference to the strategy of extreme conservatives at this time. . . . the hope was that conservative lay sentiment could be so aroused that liberal ministers would be literally frozen out, and would peaceably withdraw from the Presbyterian Church. Other leaders shared this expectation. Rather than undertake ecclesiastical prosecutions, they hoped to create a ground swell in the Church. . . which would sweep all before it.²⁵

The would-be heretic could see this as much less to be desired than the fury of an open proceeding, the idea being that "power only responds to power". This is the attitude of Bishop Pike toward his "censure" by the House of Bishops at Wheeling, West Virginia, October 1966.²⁶

Asked whether the document, as "affirmed", had relieved Pike of censure, President John E. Hines made the mistake of saying bluntly, "No". Within the day Bishop Pike reasserted his demand for a full-fledged trial.²⁷

Or, to take a page from the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy within Presbyterianism, Loetscher writes:

Dr. Charles E. Jefferson was inclined to welcome theological struggle. "We have arrived at a season of religious controversy. . . . This is a good sign. It proves that we are intellectually alive."²⁸

As to the charge that theological battles contribute to a public indifference toward religion, it seems to depend upon whether or not the issues are demonstrably not trivial. The embarrassment about medieval discussions over "how many angels can dance on the head of a pin"

²⁵Lefferts A. Loetscher, The Broadening Church (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), p. 114.

²⁶Stringfellow, op. cit., pp. 220-222.

²⁷Dan L. Thrapp, "Pike Affair Stirs Church Conscience," Los Angeles Times, (October 1, 1967).

²⁸Loetscher, op. cit., p. 124.

provides a continuing pressure against theological argumentation for its own sake.

Heresy as semantic breakdown.

Certainly some of the heresy proceedings in the past are more tangled with semantic difficulties than doctrinal ones. The tendency has often been to identify immediately an imaginative re-casting of the expression of faith with overt, deliberate heresy. As President Hibben of Princeton said in defense of Harry Emerson Fosdick,

. . . a part of the Christian Church has recently been stampeded through fear of a great teacher and prophet of righteousness in New York City, because the group which would call him to account does not speak his language or understand his thought.²⁹

It is even conceivable that, barring the political overtones, Luther and Pope Leo might have been able to work out a compromise: "I'll modify the indulgence practice, if you'll do your studying quietly in Rome." Bainton suggests that there was a stage at which very moderate changes would have caused Luther to "recede" out of respect for the quietness of the Church.³⁰ The "words" between them, however, had become too freighted with the connotations of rebellion, abusiveness, paternalism, and heresy.

Also at issue is the tendency to see faith as obedient assent rather than as imaginative involvement. Here the concept of intersection is useful, where it points to the appropriation of faith as that moment in the life of the believer when the message of the Church coincides dynamically with the existential need-situation of the person.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

³⁰ Bainton, op. cit.

In the art-science of film-making, this clash of opposite images (which produces, if effective, a third phenomenon impossible to either image independently) is called montage.³¹ Thus film sequences are edited so as to crash these opposing images together, in hopes that the "vision" of the producer can be communicated by the friction.

Translated into terms of faith communication, the doctrine of the incarnation does not become operative in the believer's consciousness until that moment when, for example, he sees the Cross as something which he himself has done to Christ: "I did it". According to this, until such an experience occurs, faith remains a dead or at least a "forced" moralism. Hence the liturgy, icons, music, drama, art, the sacraments, conspire to make the faith "sing".

Melville's Moral Skepticism.

In an attempt to draw this chapter together, it might be helpful to point to the work of Herman Melville. In Moby Dick and Billy Budd Melville invested into his characters the insights of his own religious pilgrimage. In the investigator's opinion, his work represents a tireless assault by theology upon the bastions of American literature, and is on a par with the Confessions of St. Augustine. Melville

³¹The great pioneer in this field is Sergei Eisenstein, a Russian film maker who makes montage a "dogma". In his combined works Film Form and The Film Sense (New York: World Publishing Company, 1967), p. 50, he explains his technique. "What comprises the dynamic effect of a painting? The eye follows the direction of an element in the painting. It retains a visual impression, which then collides with the impression derived from following the direction of the second element. The conflict of these directions forms the dynamic effect in apprehending the whole."

worked out a reaction against the optimism and revivalism of the nineteenth century. His contemporary and close friend Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote,

Melville stayed with us from Tuesday till Thursday; and, on the intervening day, we took a pretty long walk together, and sat down in a hollow among the sand hills . . . Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated"; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists-- and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before-- in wandering to-and-fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other.³²

³²Randall Stewart, "The Vision of Evil in Hawthorne and Melville" in Nathan A. Scott (ed.) The Tragic Vision (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. 241. Underlining is mine.

CHAPTER IV

DESTRUCTIVE ASPECTS OF HERESY PROCEEDINGS

This chapter focuses on those aspects of heresy proceedings which seem to lack any redeeming value or excuse. These aspects are not difficult to identify and substantiate since the prevailing cultural wind makes a virtue out of "religious toleration" and/or "liberty of conscience"--and especially out of the separation of Church and State (to which there seems to cling an aura of religious ultimacy). However, it is one thing to be supportive of religious toleration as an abstract principle, but quite another to make it operative with a concrete enemy. This, at least, was the dilemma of King Henry VIII in sixteenth-century England, who wanted (on the one hand) independence for the Church in England and (on the other) the support of English Catholics (such as John Fisher and Thomas More) in the matter of his divorce and remarriage. In the abstract the freedom of an English Church was attractive enough; in the concrete he executed More and Fisher when they refused to sanctify his marriage.

Myopia and legalism.

Melville's Moby Dick has a marvelous paragraph on the worst aspects of myopic orthodoxy. Writing of the bony carcass of a sperm whale which has been cut away from the whaler after butchering:

Desecrated as the body is, a vengeful ghost survives and hovers over it to scare. Espied by some timid man-of-war, or blundering discovery-vessel from afar, when the distance obscuring the swarming fowls, nevertheless still shows the white mass floating in the sun, and the white spray heaving high against it; straightway the whale's unharmed corpse, with trembling fingers is set down in the

log--shoals, rocks and breakers hereabouts: beware! And for years afterwards, perhaps, ships shun the place; leaping over it as silly sheep leap over a vacuum, because their leader originally leaped there when a stick was held. There's your law of precedents; there's your utility of traditions; there's the story of your obstinate survival of old beliefs never bottomed on the earth, and now not even hovering in the air! There's orthodoxy!¹

In this passage Melville points to the process by which traditions and cultural prejudices become baptized into dogma and thenceforth defended as if ultimately grounded. Thus Michael Servetus, because of his surgery on the doctrine of the trinity (he wrote a De Trinitatis Erroribus in 1531) was burned, and along with him went the possible further development of a series of discoveries in the human circulatory system. Servetus was by profession a medical doctor.

There is an inherent cloture built into the processes of heresy hunting, beginning perhaps with the revered notion that God has confined His revelation to a limited people: extra ecclesiam non salus est² ("outside the Church there is no salvation"). On the one hand this can be seen as a monstrous historical burden, responsibility, but on the other hand it can become license for terror. It escalates the stakes or prizes involved and leads to a deadly intolerance in the name of truth: "what better legitimation is there?" Often enough in the history of academic freedom, for example, this notion has been invoked in the name of silence. Here the fear is that open discussion

¹Herman Melville, Moby Dick or the White Whale (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 301.

²Kelly, op. cit., p. 206.

will do tangible harm to the purity of the revelation--it will become sullied by the mistreatment of irreverent minds.

Thus, in the Episcopal communion in the United States, Father Malcolm Boyd was censured for his candor with regard to the historical Jesus:

[Boyd] had suggested on a radio program that Jesus had organs like other men including even a penis. So outraged was Bishop Emrich by this astounding proposition that he publicly rebuked Father Boyd and arranged for his dismissal as chaplain at Wayne State University in Detroit.³

Or take the opposition to Bishop Pike's election to the episcopacy:

Dean Pike had taken liberal positions on most of the great social issues of the 1950's: McCarthyism, birth control, censorship, alleged communism in the churches, and so on. The real opposition to his election as bishop derived from those bishops who are persuaded that the church ought not to involve itself in any way in social or political controversy. In many cases it was not that the negative bishops differed from Pike's view, but only that they objected to his making those views public.⁴

Pike, on the other hand, sees the whole issue about candor as irrelevant: "by our actions we are already known." Or as Stringfellow sees it:

Does not the Church . . . always take a stand on every social question, whether intentionally or inadvertently, either advisedly or in absentia, sometimes by intervention or sometimes by withdrawal?⁵

All this tends to become lost for the heresy hunter; he is more concerned about the visible, obvious damage to his private conception of the Church. Thus Torquemada sits on his rooftop on Saturday

³William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, The Bishop Pike Affair (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 257.

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

⁵Ibid., p. 175.

mornings hoping to find a chimney which is without smoke--hence perhaps to snare a Christianized Jew who is secretly betraying himself by reverting to Judaism in his own house.⁶ And John Eck waits for Martin Luther to condemn himself by saying something supportive of the Bohemian John Hus, who was burned for heresy at Constance. Addressing Luther:

I see that you are following the damned and pestiferous errors of John Wyclif, who said, "It is not necessary for salvation to believe that the Roman Church is above all others." And you are espousing the pestilent errors of John Hus, who claimed that Peter neither was nor is the head of the Holy Catholic Church.⁷

Luther denied the charge, but during a break in the debate (Leipzig) reviewed the condemnation of Hus, and true to plan, came back with pro-Hus material:

. . . the council did not say that all the articles of Hus were heretical. It said that "some were heretical, some erroneous, some blasphemous, some presumptuous, some seditious, and some offensive to pious ears respectively." You should differentiate and tell us which were which.⁸

But the damage was already done: Luther was betrayed. Retorted Eck, in good guilt-by-association fashion:

Whichever they were, none of them was called most christian and evangelical; and if you defend them, then you are heretical, erroneous, blasphemous, presumptuous, seditious, and offensive to pious ears respectively.⁹

Eck was thus pushing Luther into the most compromising position

⁶Bainton, Roland H., The Travail of Religious Liberty (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 43, 44.

⁷Bainton, Roland H., Here I Stand (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1955), p. 89.

⁸Ibid., p. 90.

⁹Ibid.

possible, into a corner from which no orthodox retreat could be possible. The heresy hunter seems to delight in making a spectacle of the hunted; his approach is often punitive rather than remedial.

The Heresy of Heresy.

Turning to the moral and theological destruction wrought by heresy proceedings, the focus swings to the heresy of heresy, i.e., the functional damage done to persons and to the quality of the Christian community. Here the results can be seen in the massive anxiety and frigidity which sets in when an inquisition threatens. Particular forms which have been designed for flexibility become quickly frozen. Instead of diversity and the right of working out one's own salvation, specific belief and behaviour patterns are absolutized. The Apostles' Creed, instead of being the occasion for celebration, becomes hardened into a criterion of orthodoxy. Instead of complexity rising out of the individual apprehensions of the dynamics of faith, simplism reigns. The community is reduced to a common denominator, and the Holy Spirit gets driven away from the authorship of spontaneity back into the isolation of the third place in the Trinity.

In sum, the prerogatives of God are subsumed under powers of the corporate authority structure. God is replaced by his vicar, and becomes a secondary point of reference. The awareness of corporate sin vanishes, replaced by an idolatrous view of the establishment.

Particularly American illustrations of these phenomena are recounted in Gustavus Myer. He cites the burning of convents, the Blue Laws, the theocracy of Massachusetts, the Ku Klux Klan, and Henry

Ford's Seven Years' Calumnies Against Jews in the book The International Jew, the World's Problem (1920).¹⁰ To the extent that these horrors have been based on theological affirmations, they indicate a failure of the distinction between what is certainly known (very little, if anything) and what is functionally assumed or believed (perhaps a great deal). The difference lies with the manner in which affirmations are "held" or maintained. A person who believes, and yet is fully aware that he lacks certainty, may very well die for that belief. He is not so likely, however, to kill for it.

To put it into the context of Christian faith, the Genevan heretic Sebastien Castellio offers the insight, "That which is known is no longer believed and that which is believed by definition is not yet known."¹¹ Heresy hunters find it hard to admit this distinction--but then, so does the rest of the religious community.

Already touched upon, but not made explicit, is the enormous hostility of heresy, the delight in pointing out the falseness of belief. Certainly the flood of cartoons, woodcuts, and assorted lyrics of a satirical vein which characterized the Reformation period are an example: Luther and Lucifer conferring; Luther with the Pope hanging from his nose; Christ and the Pope in combat, with Christ vanquishing the latter; the Devil delivering a declaration of war against Luther; demons whispering in the ears of Jesuits. Such manifestations of

¹⁰Gustavus Myer, History of Bigotry in the United States (New York: Random House, 1943), pp. 333-349.

¹¹Roland H. Bainton, The Travail of Religious Liberty (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), p. 114.

dehumanized logic reveal a fundamental dignity-stripping style--aligned with and sanctioned by the conviction of persecuted righteousness.

Such is the hostility that ordinary allowances for human frailty are not made, and sickness or accident are pounced upon as indicative of the vindictive support of God: "See!" Such dynamics rule out the possibility of eccentricity in devotion; there is no provision for celebration of the unexpected paradoxes in religion, the odd details such as the Apostle Paul's thorn in the flesh, or his hostility toward women. Everything is much too serious for this dimension. The laughter which these satirical woodcuts provokes is chiefly hostile in content. The mysteries are flattened out into rationalities, contradictions are ruled out, and faith becomes a matter of possession--either you have it or you don't.

The effects of this approach can be seen on the way the heritage of the Church is handled. For example,

. . . the Bible becomes a quantitative norm of belief, a collection of proof texts for dogmatic propositions and articles. In this way the one Word of God becomes fragment into a number of individual, mutually independent sayings of God--indeed must we not go on to say that it becomes the constituent parts of a dictionary of God. It does not matter whether something is contained in the Book of Numbers or the Sermon on the Mount, in the Book of Esther or the Epistle to the Romans, it is all the same. And anyone who can find no differences within the Bible soon becomes indifferent to the whole of it.¹²

More serious than this is the effect upon that unique contribution to world history: the discerning imaginative interpretations and questionings of the believing man. The hostility invoked by the

¹²Heinz Zahrnt, The Historical Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 31.

spectre of condemnation forces him to either subside, make his thinking scarce, or recant. And as Castellio pointed out, "To force conscience is worse than cruelly to kill a man." To back this point up, Castellio cites examples of men who have recanted (gone back on their earlier contentions) and thereafter suffered complete moral disintegration.¹³

The Termination of Joy

In summary, the world of the Inquisitor is a moralistic, castigating, joyless, bitter, hostile and uncreative one. The human spirit seems not to thrive under the pervasive fear of heresy, nor do the great theological polarities such as judgment/forgiveness fare any better. Longfellow's poem Torquemada¹⁴ points to the irreparable damage which is possible. The cruelty of heresy proceedings makes it possible to understand why the genius of Helen Keller should find the bland but kind theologizing of Emanuel Swedenborg¹⁵ so much more attractive than traditional Christianity. She idealizes him as founder of "the most independent movement in the history of religious thought."¹⁶ Perhaps, unlike the Inquisitor, scorn for her deviation should be tempered by charity.

¹³Bainton, The Travail of Religious Liberty, p. 120.

¹⁴Included in the appendix.

¹⁵Swedenborg, whose dates are 1689-1772, wrote some sixty theological works, and claimed a direct communication with God as the source of his ideas.

¹⁶Helen Keller, My Religion (New York: The Hearst Corporation, 1960), p. 19.

CHAPTER V

THE NECESSITY OF DOCTRINAL LIMITATION

The intention of this chapter is to make a case for doctrinal norms-setting as a necessary feature of the attempt at maintaining a coherent message. The focus will be upon the "limits of orthodox belief" and upon the constructive functions served by heresy proceedings, actual or threatened. The chapter sub-sections will deal with some recurring justifications offered by churchmen past and present for the process of defending the faith by means of doctrinal formulation.

Doctrines assume that ideas have consequences.

Perhaps a clearer way of stating this is that doctrinal norms provide a climate in which what a man thinks about the faith becomes an important matter.

There is a prevailing temptation in any pluralistic society to extrapolate from the apparent harmony of the social melting-pot the idea that beliefs are inconsequential, and that codes of behavior are more to the point than are codes of belief. This temptation is nourished in America by a number of factors, among them are the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, and the Yankee pragmatism of the John Dewey and William James school ("What works is best.")¹

¹Gerald Cooke, As Christians Face Rival Religions (New York: Association Press, 1962), p. 212, represents Dewey as maintaining that "theologies and doctrines are expendable--and the sooner the better! Dewey was convinced that a common faith could be practiced by all men of good will and intelligence without reference to particular and exclusive historical traditions and organization."

The development of modern psychology may also be a factor. More than ever before we are aware of the radical discontinuity between what we "believe" and how we "operate" as functional human beings. For example, it is possible to affirm stoutly that "In Christ there is no East or West", and yet be racial segregationists and hostile toward any form of international cooperation (such as the United Nations). Such generalized observations lend weight to the temptation to relegate questions of doctrine and belief to a minor, even inconsequential, role.

Jones seems to support this anti-doctrinal temptation where he writes,

If by any chance Christ himself had been taken by his later followers as the model and pattern of the new way, and a serious attempt had been made to set up his life and teaching as the standard and norm for the Church, Christianity would have been something vastly different from what it became. Then "heresy" would have been, as it is not now, deviation from His way, His teaching, His spirit, His kingdom. Love and Life--not doctrine--would have been the sacred words, the spiritual realities for a Christian.²

The difficulty with this way of posing the problem is apparent in the contradictory equation of "love and life" with "sacred words". Jones is unable to substitute behavioral norms (love and life) for the less desirable doctrinal norms without backing them up with verbal or idea structure, i.e., "sacred words". This puts him back into the struggle with the original difficulty, namely, keeping doctrinal norms from becoming rigid and repressive. How are "love and life" to be defined and perpetuated as guiding images for the Christian community?

²Rufus M. Jones, The Church's Debt to Heretics (New York: Doran, 1924?), pp. 15, 16.

Somehow, to sustain and perpetuate its goals in even a minimal fashion, a "movement" (in this case, Christianity) must necessarily formulate in words, creeds or guiding symbols what it expects of itself in terms of common beliefs and assumptions. This is not to say that the goals of a movement can ever be finally "contained" or "boxed-in" by formulations, but that some structure must be provided if the movement is to preserve its relationship to its origins. Even Anthony Towne, who writes satirically grants the church this necessary prerogative. "Not that every deviation from doctrine is wholesome, or that no deviation is culpable, for there is certainly an obligation on the church's part to preserve itself from anarchy of doctrine."³

Towne is quick, however, to distinguish between heresy as "deviation from orthodox traditions", which he regards as frequently commendable, and heresy as "deviation from the gospel", which he regards as always "bad".⁴ He overlooks the fact that the New Testament documents are themselves the product of "orthodox traditions" (referred to in Biblical research as "oral tradition"), and are thus subject to the exigencies of majority opinion. It is thus more difficult to separate Tradition from the "original gospel" than Towne suggests. The option

³Anthony Towne, "In Defense of Heresy," Christian Century (January 11, 1967), pp. 44-47 with the subtitle, "There is no defense whatever for heresy against the gospel. Often, however, heresy against the church is heresy in favor of the gospel." Anthony Towne, a poet and free lance writer, is co-author with William Stringfellow of The Bishop Pike Affair (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

⁴Towne, Ibid., p. 44.

of choosing the gospel over the Tradition is not readily available, even to Biblical scholars.

Gilbert K. Chesterton is often quoted as pushing even farther than Towne, who in the foregoing quotation gives the church the right to preserve itself from anarchy of doctrine. Philip Wogaman quotes him as saying "tolerance is a virtue of people who don't believe anything."⁵ Horton Davies quotes Chesterton as author of the remark that "the effect of studying comparative religions is to make one comparatively religious."⁶ At first glance, such comments appear hopelessly narrow, imperialistic and exclusive. Yet Chesterton may be pushing by means of literary exaggeration toward a less apologetic Christian stance--and at the same time satirizing the syncretism and culture-religion of modern secular societies.

This concern for an unapologetic declaration of the limitations of the Christian faith is shared with a vengeance by W. A. Visser T' Hooft.⁷ Writing as General Secretary for the World Council of Churches, his views cannot readily be dismissed as those of an intolerant religious bigot. His main contention is against doctrinal relativism, the kind of emancipated neutrality regarding belief which characterizes

⁵Philip Wogaman, Protestant Faith and Religious Liberty (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), p. 125. Wogaman cites as source for this quotation Reinhold Niebuhr Nature and Destiny of Man (II, 238 but there is no such quotation there.)

⁶Horton Davis, Christian Deviation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 137.

⁷W. A. Visser T'Hooft, No Other Name (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963).

much interaction between cultures. At least one observer, also concerned about ecumenism, maintains that Visser T'Hooft goes too far in his reaction, and becomes absolutist.⁸

The following quotations will serve to represent his position:

We cannot participate in the search for a common denominator of all the religions, because the one foundation has been laid.⁹

. . . the Church has been very much preoccupied with the many who think that all religions are equally false [marxists?]. It should become concerned with those who think all religions are equally true [syncretists].¹⁰

Syncretism as he defines it is a religious attitude that there is no unique revelation, that there are many ways to reach divine reality, that only gradual differences exist between religions.¹¹

The problem with this anti-syncretist polemic is that it can readily lead to an arrogantly imperialistic, private-possession oriented, defensively monological apologetic stance. And such a stance soon becomes sterile and self-satisfied, lacking the sharpening vigor brought by open clash with other structures of belief. Visser T'Hooft is quick to assert that this is not his intention, just as it is not the intention of New Testament orthodoxy:

⁸Commenting on Visser T'Hooft's statement that "We of the WCC believe that doctrinal relativism is not an ally but rather a danger for true ecumenism doctrinal relativism would seem to be the opposite of doctrinal absolutism," writes Winfred E. Garrison, The Quest and Character of a United Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 208.

⁹Visser T'Hooft, op. cit., p. 113.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 49.

¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

New Testament orthodoxy does not consist in an anxious holding on to specific forms of expression . . . [but] in uncompromising holding fast of the central and unique evangel that God is in Christ and that the deeds of God in Christ are the crucial turning point in the destiny of man.¹²

Viewed in this fashion, an anti-syncretist position does not rule out making use of the thought forms of alien cultures, so long as the unique "evangel" is kept intact. An example might be St. Paul's address on Mars' hill, which borrowed freely from the thought forms of the Athenians (Acts 17:16-31).

Doctrinal norms, then, so long as they bear direct witness to the "unique evangel that God is in Christ", may be considered necessary to the maintenance of a lively dependent relation to the original events. They (doctrinal norms) serve to continually bring pressure upon the creeping assumption that ideas do not have consequences. They draw attention to the particularity of the Christian faith, thus putting pressure on those who would seek to be consistently neutral or tentative about conflicting ideas or value-systems. Doctrinal norms force distinctions and hidden creeds out into the open, thus providing a context out of which every believer must declare himself.

The foregoing attempt to vindicate the setting of doctrinal norms is in no way intended to disregard the fact that such norms also serve destructive ends. Rather, the intention is to translate into contemporary terms the tension between relativism and absolutism which has been ever present in the history of the Church, a tension which (particularly when heresy is suspected) calls every believer's thinking

¹²Ibid., pp. 73, 74.

into review. This absolutism/relativism tension is apparent even in the New Testament. On the one hand Jesus is presented as open-ended and anti-dogmatist: he recognizes faith in a Roman centurion,¹³ and commands wheat and tares be allowed to grow together until harvest.¹⁴ Yet on the other hand he is represented as calling for an uncompromising, single minded, exclusive commitment: "He that is not with me is against me"¹⁵; "I am the Way . . . no man comes to the Father but by me"¹⁶.

These two motifs constantly vie with one another, and it would seem that doctrinal norms simply raise this "vying" to a conscious level in the life of the historical Christian community. Doctrines serve to keep the great themes of the faith in some kind of heteronomous balance; one motif cannot be allowed finally to swallow another.¹⁷ Relating this to the examples given in the preceding paragraph, devotion is required, but so also is love.

Insofar, then, as doctrinal limitations put pressure on every believer to seek the whole message of the gospels, as opposed to convenient bits and pieces (e.g., scissors-and-paste versions of the New Testament), they may be regarded as serving a vital function for the ongoing witness of the church. And despite the repressive and inhumane workings-out of such limitations (e.g., the burning of

¹³Luke 7:1-9.

¹⁴Matthew 13:30.

¹⁵Luke 11:23.

¹⁶John 14:6

¹⁷This would confirm Dr. George Buttrick's definition of heresy, given at the School of Theology, Claremont, California, 1966: "Heresy is the exaggeration of one leg of a paradox."

Michael Servetus in the sixteenth century for tampering with the doctrine of the Trinity), this positive dynamic cannot be overlooked. At their best, doctrinal norms assure every believer that when he thinks about the faith--his own reflective interpretation--matters enough to be zealously guarded and limited by the doctrinal traditions of the over-arching community of believers.

John Cobb,¹⁸ however, sees the function of doctrine in somewhat less positive light. Apparently, he is so impressed by the divisive and repressive applications of doctrine in the past that he seeks elsewhere for a "principle of delimitation".

. . . doctrine . . . can never be the criterion of Christianity.¹⁹
No human formulation of Christian belief can be finally binding.¹⁹

Instead of doctrine, he offers what is hopefully a more pragmatic and equitable criterion: there must be some principle of delimitation.

.
Wherever the attitude of receptive openness to Jesus is adopted, the faith that results is authentically Christian, however much it may be conditioned by secular and intellectual factors. . . . Any perspective is Christian when it includes the serious acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord. This acknowledgment is not the statement of a belief about Jesus' nature but the submission of ourselves to him.²⁰

For a "principle of delimitation", this seems amorphous and without definite "teeth" for meeting the challenge of chaotic pluralism.

¹⁸John B. Cobb, Jr., Varieties of Protestantism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

¹⁹Ibid., p. 244.

²⁰Ibid., p. 245.

For example, when a person gives "serious acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord", there is no indication as to which particular portrait of Our Lord is being submitted to. Cobb's principle effectively by-passes the instructing and guiding role of the historic Christian community, and replaces it with individual interpretation. To go this route would be tantamount to returning to the chaos of first-century Christianity, when the lack of creedal definitions worked out by ecumenical councils gave free reign to dozens of rival charismatic movements.

Cobb's definition gains in simplicity and freedom of thought what it loses in fidelity to the main-stream historical Tradition. It has no guard against dilletantism, against those charismatics who would evangelize on the basis of an undialogical view of Jesus,²⁰ or against those who would assume that "their" revelation about Jesus is necessarily superior to (purer than) traditional formulations about him. It assumes that the uninitiated neophyte has ready access to the basic faith without the encumbrance of those doctrines whose intention it has been to preserve, defend and keep intact the original events.

But perhaps this is to leave a prior question begging, namely, what percentage of orthodox doctrines have in fact sought to "preserve, defend, and keep intact the original events", as opposed to serving the God-in-a-box defensively territorial function? Such a percentage would of course be impossible to determine empirically, since it would be dependent upon the researcher's assessment of the validity and trustworthiness of majority opinion in the Church.

²⁰Ibid., p. 245.

For example, Monsignor Leon Cristiani, a French Catholic as recently as 1959 dismisses Martin Luther as a "trivial mind . . . incapable of clear thought."²¹ On the one hand, this judgment indicates a "high" assessment of majority opinion in the sixteenth-century Church. Luther was spoiling the vineyard, destroying the hegemony and unity of the Rome-centered Catholicism. But on the other hand, Cristiani's judgment reflects a "low" estimate of the rights of the Christian conscience, coupled with the assumption that the faith resides authentically only in a Roman package--and that a witness from outside that package is ipso facto illegitimate. Cristiani quotes a reformed French churchman as saying "You would never believe what a service the Reformation rendered to the Catholic Church; it has relieved her of heresies, and we have inherited them".²² Cristiani's principle of delimitation would thus be too narrow, hierarchical and arbitrary, even as Cobb's is too diffuse, individualistic, and prone to Biblicism.²³

A middle way between these poles would both affirm the importance of doctrine as a context of belief to which every Christian is answerable and declare that no one such doctrine can ever be a complete and final expression of the originally-intended content. That is to

²¹Leon Cristiani, Heresies and Heretics (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), p. 80.

²²Ibid., p. 100. Although this work offers a creditable view of heresies and their effects from a Catholic perspective, the remark quoted is closer to slander than to the disciplines of Church History.

²³Cristiani regards Biblicism as "a centrifugal force, a ferment of disruption and division ad infinitum"--and there is much in Protestantism to support him (Ibid., p. 91).

say, doctrines are necessary, but never completely adequate. They are more in the nature of "guiding images" than "rigid proscription".

It seems probable that doctrines become progressively less adequate as they are used to defend a kind of territorial hegemony on orthodoxy. So long as they are used to articulate the faith in a confessional or witness-bearing manner, and so long as they are consciously reviewed in the light of new access to the original events (Biblical criticism), they serve as the intended ballast for the Christian movement.

Hans Leitzmann points in this direction where he writes of the apostle Paul, "No matter what forms of expression he used, they were never allowed to dominate their content; that content remained intact, and fully operative."²⁴ This goes too far in assuming that Paul's thinking about the "content" (the Christ Event) is fully equivalent to the original events; nevertheless, Leitzmann's intention is clear: form is subordinate to content. Doctrine is subordinate to the Christ Event, and should never arrogate to itself a prior eminence.

Oscar Cullmann writes that in the New Testament record, Syncretistic elements, even myths, were indeed appropriated, but they were subordinated to the Christological structure which received its character not from syncretism, not from Hellenism, not from mythology, but from the Heilsgeschichte. It is characteristic of this structure that from the very beginning it centres in a real history.²⁵

To make the Heilsgeschichte the criterion upon which all

²⁴Quoted in Visser T'Hooft, op. cit., p. 73.

²⁵Quoted in Ibid.

subsequent doctrinal formulations are to be based is not, of course, to eliminate all the attendant problems. Again, the exigencies of majority opinion are at work to force the question upon us, "Heilsgeschichte according to whom?" The major point here is that doctrines are not to be regarded as having authority (even when ratified by an ecumenical council) independent from the Christ Event. Every doctrinal formulation, just as every member of the Universal Church, stands under the scrutiny and judgment of that event.

To say this is to attack the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic communion, which seems to regard doctrines as having authority independent of the original events. Pope Pius XI, in his 1928 Encyclical Mortalium Animos, warns against the ecumenical movement in the following way: "A federation of Christians, then, is inconceivable in which each member retains his own opinions and private judgments in matters of faith, . . . Unity can arise only from one teaching authority, one law of belief, and one faith of Christians."²⁶ And the implication is that the "one" authority resides within the structures of Roman Catholicism.

That the doctrines of the Roman Church have an independent authority in and of themselves, and not subordinate to the Christ Event, is explicitly denied in the same letter,

The teaching authority of the Church in the divine wisdom was constituted on earth in order that the revealed doctrines might remain forever intact. . . This authority is indeed daily exercised

²⁶The full text of the Encyclical appears in Appendix II of Albert C. Outler, That The World May Believe (New York: The Methodist Church, 1966), pp. 129, 130.

through the Roman pontiff and the Bishops who are in communion with him; . . . But in the use of this extraordinary teaching authority no fresh invention is introduced, nothing new is ever added to the number of those truths which are at least implicitly contained within the deposit of Revelation divinely committed to the Church; but truths which to some perhaps may still seem obscure are rendered clear, or a truth which some may have called into question is declared to be of faith.²⁷

The uncritical naivete of such a disclaimer (that doctrine has in any sense imaginatively developed in the history of the Church) is pointed out both from within and without the Roman communion.²⁸ Leslie Dewart, Catholic professor at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, writes,

I underscore this: the fact of which we have recently become aware is not that Christian doctrine has begun to develop in recent times, but that it has always existed in a process of development. It is only the awareness of this fact that is new. . . . It is because human experience in general has become aware of its historical character that Christianity has become aware of its own.²⁸

The Protestant attack on the position that doctrines have not developed has recently clustered around the idea of the Protestant Principle, chiefly articulated by Paul Tillich.

The Protestant principle, in name derived from the protest of "protestants" against decisions of the Catholic majority, contains the divine and human protest against any absolute claim made for a relative reality, even if this claim is made by a Protestant Church. The Protestant principle is the judge of every religious and cultural reality, including the religion and culture which calls itself "Protestant".²⁹

²⁷Pope Pius XI, "Mortalium Animos" cited in Ibid., p. 131.

²⁸As this investigator sees it, to admit that doctrines do in fact develop at all is also to admit that the teaching authority claims a priority independent of the original revelation through the Christ Event.

²⁹Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 163.

Tillich further shuts the door against doctrinal absolutism where he writes,

. . . you cannot reach God by the work of right thinking or by a sacrifice of the intellect or by a submission to strange authorities, such as the doctrines of the church and the Bible. You cannot, and you are not even asked to try it. Neither works of piety nor works of morality nor works of the intellect establish unity with God.³⁰

For such a view as this, the Christ Event towers over every human interpretation of that event; men do not have direct or absolutely reliable access to it. Yet to admit this is not to say "why bother with interpreting the Christ Event at all?", or to dismiss glibly the witness of nineteen centuries of doctrinal heritage. As with the issue of Biblical infallibility, to say that doctrines are often in error is not to say that they are untrustworthy.

Somehow, the tension between the individual conscience and the conscience of the community crystallized in doctrine and creed must be maintained. It is the investigator's opinion that doctrinal norms at their best can keep this tension alive by (1) reminding believers that ideas are more than playthings and that they have serious consequences when worked out in human experience, and (2) by reminding believers that truth is a mystery which defies all attempts at final packaging. The first function guards against relativism which would make of the faith a kind of smorgasbord for everyman's taste, while the second function guards against an absolutism which would say "there is only one authority, one means of access to the truth".

³⁰Ibid., p. xv.

A specific example of the way doctrines relate to the absolute/relative tension can be seen in the development of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In its earliest formulations, the role of the Holy Spirit was variously defined as that of comforter, guide-in-truth, sanctifier, the one by whom the Virgin Mary conceived, the active presence of the Risen Lord, the creator of the Christian fellowship. These role-assignments were just indefinite enough to become reinforcement for a multitude of variegated ideas subsequently projected into them. Some believers (such as the Montanists) who felt estranged from majority opinion claimed the Holy Spirit as the revealer of their new, enthusiastic, ascetic movement. Such attempts at self-validation by means of claiming the Holy Spirit as source have sometimes created a kind of immunity from inspection which dissident movements have not hesitated to exploit. Monsignor Cristiani writes of the Holy Spirit (Paraclete) as "darling of the heretics".³¹ In psychological parlance, the Holy Spirit becomes a pawn in a game of theological one-upsmanship.

It would be a mistake, however, to claim that only dissidents or schismatics have exploited the Holy Spirit as ready reinforcement for threatened ideas or practices. Note the following statement which comes out of the controversy over icons in the eighth century, Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea):

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the

³¹Cristiani, op. cit., p. 62.

figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God. . . .³²

From this it would seem that the Paraclete is also the "darling" of the majority.

Other believers have seen the Holy Spirit as the life-giver who keeps the movement vital, its forms from becoming encrusted with arbitrary tradition.

. . . the Holy Spirit has guarded Christian's thought of God from too precise formulation and too definitive limitation. . . . The Holy Spirit has kept Christian's thought of God "open-ended" toward new discoveries springing from new experiences of God, in turn testimonies to new revelations of Himself by God.³³

The variety of uses to which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been put gives rise to the temptation to regard it as no more than clay for every kind of Christian or sub-Christian craftsmanship, and therefore that the doctrine itself is dead weight. To fall into this temptation, however, would require a negation of the historic experience of Christians. In fact, it was precisely because the experience (attributed to the Spirit) was so widespread, that the Fathers felt it necessary to work out the philosophical implications of that experience. To do otherwise would have meant a serious devaluation of Christian experience. And furthermore, the Fathers had administrative concern over the fact that the Holy Spirit ideas created a centrifugal force, so long as there existed no firm statement of what the whole community

³²John H. Leith, Creeds of the Churches (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), p. 55.

³³Henry P. Van Dusen, Spirit, Son and Father (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 18.

could normatively affirm without violating either the Biblical record or the experience of the faithful.

To admit thus that the Father's attention to doctrinal formulation was based on a manifest and obvious need, it is not necessary to ignore the other purely secular and socio-political factors which were also at work. The Emperor Constantine, for example, was more concerned over preserving his empire from internal collapse than he was over any theological issues. But even without these forces, the work of the Fathers was in demand; they were concerned about order, continuity, and the survival of a scattered movement. Of course, they also came to the early councils with their own private predispositions and prejudices, but generally it is safe to say they were more concerned about the historical survival of the Christian community than they were about their own existential experience. Even Rufus Jones has noted this: "Orthodoxy has . . . formed around the essentials for salvation and theories of eschatology. Heresies . . . have been more concerned with experience, with maintaining a continuous revelation of the Spirit here and now."³⁴

In other words, heresies tend to err in the direction of individualism and private experience, whereas orthodoxies err in the direction of absolutism and the dominance of majority opinion. Where both get into trouble is the point at which, in order to substantiate their claims, they claim direct or unmistakable access to the primal events out of which Christianity was born. It is the investigator's

³⁴Jones, op. cit., p. 13.

opinion that at no place are these claims to "direct access" more radically called into question than in the encounter of heresy proceedings, especially when there is a degree of balance-of-power, i.e., when the accused is allowed a fair hearing.

In summary the Church by allowing and initiating heresy proceedings (with all attendant embarrassment and anxiety) has announced to her cultural environment that the ideas to which she bears witness are of gravest consequence and that to treat them casually is to imperial the whole created order. Heresy proceedings by their very composition affirm the whole questioning process by which the Church seeks to purify her witness. If this had not been the case, there would have only occurred excommunications and denunciations, no heresy trials, no controversy over doctrine, no admission that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels".³⁵

Doctrines guard against self-styled charismatics.

Particularly in the popular literature of church history, there is a noticeable tendency toward the idealization of dissent, the romantic re-working of historical controversies so that heretics become heroes. This tendency can find objective support in that heretics of one era (such as Joan of Arc) have often in fact become saints in the next. However, the subjective basis for this idealizing tendency is more probably traceable to "bias in favor of the underdog",

³⁵The Apostle Paul's confessional note at this point (II Corinthians 4:7) is instructive in that the weakness of the vessel does not devalue the worth of the treasure.

particularly among those Protestants who readily identify with a minority self-image.

Frank S. Mead, who is a Baptist and author of a popular book on heresies introduces his book with the following:

In an offbeat way they [heretics] are the imps of God scampering among us as we struggle up the holy hill, jabbing at us with their little darts of ridicule and righteous anger as we blunder on, and we wish that they might go fall off a precipice somewhere, . . . yet they are divinely commissioned to give us a sense of proportion and balance, to get us off dead center. They do make us move, if only in self-defense. And they carry merry little brooms with which they sweep away the cobwebs and let the light come through.³⁶

In the same vein, but from an Anglican point of view, is Conrad Noel who introduces his book with the following:

The flame of truth and justice was kept alive in all ages by heroic souls who were content to be persecuted and scorned as quacks and heretics; sometimes they protested against the accepted theology of their age, sometimes against its political corruptions. These small groups are in every generation the salt of the earth, and without them a living orthodoxy will be stifled by dull conventionality.³⁷

George H. Shriver,³⁸ recounts the heresy proceedings against five American church leaders: Philip Schaff, German Reformed; Crawford Howell Toy, Southern Baptist; Charles Augustus Briggs, Presbyterian; Borden Parker Bowne, Methodist Episcopal; Algernon Sidney Crapsey,

³⁶Frank S. Mead, Rebels With a Cause (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 8. Mead has chapters on Simon Magus, Marcion, Montanus ("Hocus Pocus And Heretics"), and Martin Luther ("The Wild Boar"). It would be unfair to imply that he regards all heresies as constructive, but that is his general tendency.

³⁷Noel Conrad, Jesus the Heretic (London: Religious Book Club, 1940), p. vii.

³⁸George H. Shriver, American Religious Heretics (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966).

Protestant Episcopal. Defining heresy as that which challenges a closed system of orthodoxy, he depicts heretics as cathartic agents who pry their institutions from frozen forms. Unfortunately, the selection of example "heretics" is weighed in favor of eminently responsible men whose reputation as scholars extends far outside the ecclesiastical circle. Intentionally or not, this prejudices the case against the over-arching process by which churches seek to retain their integrity. As Clyde Manschrick in his review of Shriver's book says,

. . . unfortunately the authors are so intent on defending the heretics that an imbalance results. One would suppose that the institution is almost always wrong and heretics almost always right. While free thought can well be lauded, there is such a thing as institutional responsibility under which an institution has both a right and a duty to preserve its confessed faith.³⁹

What the three works just cited seem to lack is a lively sense of the realistic danger posed by persons who seek to exploit the Tradition for their own ends, or who ignore the corporate responsibilities of the Christian, or who make absolutistic claims for the catholicity of their private opinions. The problem for this section of the paper is to distinguish between Christian charisma and self-styled arrogant individualism. What distinguishes the Apostle Paul from Simon Magus? Both were gifted and had a following, but only one was condemned by the first-century church.⁴⁰

Is there any noticeable qualitative difference between an Arius

³⁹ Clyde Manschrick, Book Review, American Religious Heretics Chicago Theological Seminary Register (March 1967), 19.

⁴⁰ Simon's condemnation is alluded to by Luke in Acts 8:9-24, the implication being that he wanted to exploit the Holy Spirit for money--hence the term "simony".

and an Athanasius, between Augustine and Pelagius? It is possible to dismiss the agonies of controversy and condemnation (heresy proceedings) on the grounds that they indicate the triumph of "exclusivism" over the "inclusivism" of the teachings of Jesus. This route is taken by Floyd Ross⁴¹ who in very vigorous terms castigates the Christian movement for formulating doctrines as fences against deviations of belief and behaviour. Once again it would seem that what is being ignored is the fact that had not the early church sought to hammer out a normative orthodoxy (including anathemas against those condemned) the whole movement would have splintered and been swallowed by its resident cultures.

This is not to say that all repressive measures adopted by the majority can be justified by subsequent and more sensitive observers, but simply that the church as a corporate unit reacted to that unbribed freedom of interpretation which threatened her survival. And furthermore, it would seem that what Ross calls "exclusivism" is in fact inherent in any process of self-definition. For example, for the church to define her vision of the importance of Jesus the Christ, it was absolutely necessary for her to choose between Athanasius and Arius, or at least between the positions represented by these two men. To be horrified at the negative results of that choice is another matter; at issue is whether or not it was incumbent upon the church to face and make the choice.

Apparently what happened was that the church began as an

⁴¹Floyd Ross, Addressed To Christians Isolation Versus World Community (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950).

absolutely voluntary society, sustained largely by its recollections of Jesus and having no organized machinery for dealing with the multiplicity of Christian movements. Only gradually did the firming-up process take hold, with the gathering of "canonical" documents, the calling of councils, and the formulation of normative doctrines.⁴² Greenslade describes the situation in the following manner:

. . .in answer to the grave challenge of gnosticism and to some extent Montanism, the whole Church as such had become aware of the problems of authority and catholicity. Above all it claimed to be apostolic. To the gnostics who boasted either to have discovered new truth or to possess secret traditions, and to the Montanists who believed that the revelation to and through the apostles had been surpassed by the Paraclete's particular inspiration of their own prophets, the Church declared that it stood by the apostolic teaching summed up in the apostolic rule of faith, by the apostolic writings and in general by the tradition of churches with an unbroken tradition of faith and worship, a continuity with the apostles of which the succession of bishops was both a testimony and an instrument. This is the argument worked out by Irenaeus and Tertullian.⁴³

This firming-up process led to the making of lists of condemned ideas or movements, catalogs of heresies of varying virulence. Augustine, in his De Haeresibus lists 88 distinct heresies apparent to him, and describes his methodology for dealing with them.

Schismatics and dissenters are madmen rushing to their own destruction and creating a public peril, so they must be restrained for their own good or put out of the way for the common welfare.⁴⁴

The citation of such repressive methodology can provide further

⁴²Garrison, op. cit., p. 38 writes that "The New Testament Church had no members who did not want to be members of it."

⁴³S. L. Greenslade, Schism In The Early Church (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 169.

⁴⁴Garrison, op. cit., pp. 108, 109.

ammunition for those church critics who denigrate her attempts at defending "the faith once delivered". Augustine's attitude at this point can be added to the mention of the Spanish Inquisition, the Star Chamber "hearings" during the English Reformation, the witch-hunts in Massachusetts. But horror over medieval methodologies should not diminish appreciation for the life-and-death struggle of the early church in preserving her integrity. As Jean Guitton, French Catholic says of the twelfth-century Albigensian heresy,

The Inquisition was born of the need to extirpate the remnants of the heresy. As we sit in judgment over this tribunal with its frightful excesses, we must take account not only of the mentality of the Middle Ages; we must also measure the horror of the remedy by the horror of the disease.⁴⁵

The "disease" Guitton mentions is chiefly that perfectionistic individualism which takes no account of the corporate dimensions of the Church, choosing rather to pick and choose from the heritage of Scripture and Tradition whatever commends itself at the time. These Albigensian and related movements (which Guitton lumps into the category of Cathari, "those who insist on complete purity in this life") represented a simplistic return to the apostolic purity of the early church. Guitton maintains, however, that their major threat derived from their anti-institutionalism, their total withdrawal from the

⁴⁵ Jean Guitton, Great Heresies and Church Councils (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 130. English translation by F. D. Wieck. Guitton is a French philosopher and historian who was the only Catholic layman appointed by the Pope to act as lay observer at Vatican Council II.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 126.

the corrupt medieval Church. As he writes, "they would dissolve the structure in the name of the spirit who is the author of the structure".⁴⁶

Perhaps a more acute observation is that the Cathari simply substitute one form of institutionalism for another, and that the real problem (namely human pride, hubris) remains untouched--and that what is called for in every age is institutional repentance on the model of the Reformation's ecclesia semper reformanda. At any rate, Guitton does offer a useful distinction between the charisma of the orthodox and that of the heretic:

The great difficulty in every movement of purification is not to make a break. He who breaks, destroys--he does not purify. This is the difference between the reformer and the saint, between the catharist and the truly pure.⁴⁷

What this does to a Martin Luther is not immediately clear, since despite his excommunication, Luther repeatedly affirmed his desire to remain with the Roman Catholic communion. Guitton himself is uncertain whether to call Protestantism a "heresy" or a "major crisis".⁴⁸ In declaring the supremacy of scripture over the teaching authority of the church ("I do not accept the authority of popes or councils, for they have contradicted each other--my conscience is captive to the Word of God") Luther was in a sense downgrading the Tradition. Perhaps his attitude toward the Peasant's Revolt of 1524 (he opposed it, even though he was regarded initially as their liberator), and his

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 150. Referring to Luther's emphasis on faith alone (sola fide!), Guitton writes "If Protestantism is a heresy it is, in terms of dogma, a heresy of maximism."--i.e., God does everything, man only responds.

restraining of the image-breaking mob at Wittenberg (1522) are more indicative of his appreciation for the Tradition.

Gitton's distinction (between reformer and true saint) is perhaps better illustrated by men such as George Fox and Thomas Muntzer. Both men regarded the direct revelation of the Holy Spirit as commanding priority over either Scripture or Tradition, which is a way of elevating individualism over the corporate identity of the church. Fox, the father of the Quaker movement in England, insisted on the "inner light" as the primal spiritual authority, and his disciple James Naylor carried this to absurdity by accepting plaudits as "Son of Zion, whose mother is a Virgin and whose birth is immortal."⁴⁹

Muntzer, the great protagonist of the Radical Reformation in Germany, made similar claims for the primacy of individual revelation. In his Manifesto of 1521, he emphasized "the living voice of God, the inner Christ", and called for the worship of a "speaking" rather than "silent" God.⁵⁰ This thrust could as easily be found among the writings of the most "catholic" of mystics, but in Muntzer's case it gets pushed to a literalistic and sectarian degree. He organized a Bund, a league or covenant for the preservation of "serious Christianity"--and he participated in the Peasant's Revolt for which he was executed (1525).

⁴⁹Hans J. Hillerbrand, A Fellowship of Discontent (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 87. Hillerbrand maintains that this Naylor episode was good for Quakerism in that it forced Fox toward a more realistic view of sin, and toward the "collective inner light." (p. 91)

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 7.

Without denying their value in stimulating reforms, it would seem that Fox and Muntzer erred chiefly in their doctrine of the Church (ecclesiology). Like the Cathari, they yearned for the mythical purity of the New Testament church, a church with a minimum of organization and a maximum of Spirit. Both men were touched with a perfectionism regarding the pervasiveness of sin, both institutionally and personally, which threw them back toward that ancient Donatism which denied that God could work through imperfect vessels.

Leith maintains that creeds and doctrines represent a "sense of the meeting", a crystallization of common consent.

The Creed of Nicaea is a notable example of a creed that had to wait the confirmation of history. It was debated by the Church for fifty years before it became the consensus of the Church. Creeds cannot be imposed by simple fiat upon the Church. They are examined, corrected, rejected, and confirmed by history. In the long run, they have to be confirmed not by some assembly so much as by the common-sense wisdom of the Christian community. To use a Quaker term, they must become the "sense of the meeting" to have abiding authority.⁵¹

If what Leith observes in the history of creedal formulation is accurate (as opposed to considering creeds as the products of a sophisticated theological minority), the Fox and Muntzer approach is thrown into revealing perspective. Again, and without detracting from the positive stimulus-to-reform initiated by these two men,⁵² it would seem that they were not characterized by the patient process of waiting for

⁵¹Leith, op. cit., p. 3.

⁵²Fox helped establish a plain, straightforward Christianity as a viable alternative to the more sophisticated, ritualized, liturgical Christianity of the "Majesterial Reformers". Also, by welcoming women as full participants, he helped break down the male-domination of the Church.

any "sense of the meeting". Both were much too impatient for that, finding it too frustrating to wait for that sifting, screening, dialogical process out of which doctrines and creeds have been hammered in the past. Whether this reveals a fundamental hostility toward the Tradition, or simply an uncommon degree of audacious daring, it is only possible to speculate. It is possible that upon deeper investigation, every believer would have to admit that he too at times "cannot wait", and pushes ahead with his own biases as if they had been validated by "The Church".

Fox goes somewhat farther than Muntzer in that he explicitly regards Scripture as well as Tradition as being an inadequate source of revelation,

It is repeatedly stated that Christ said this, the apostles said that. But what do you yourselves say? Are you a son of light? Have you walked in the way of light, and does what you say come to you directly from God.⁵³

Muntzer's approach to Scripture is pointed to by Hillerbrand in the following,

Muntzer never forgave Luther that he repudiated one external authority (the Pope) only to accept another one (the Bible). He spoke of the Bible as "paper pope" Not that Muntzer did not think highly of the Bible. This he did and he could prooftext like an orthodox divine from the seventeenth century. But the Bible was only the record of the Spirit's communication with man, and Muntzer made a point that the prophets had always asserted: "thus saith the Lord" and never "thus said the Lord."⁵⁴

⁵³Cristiani, op. cit., p. 96. The author calls this approach to revelation "illuminism".

⁵⁴Hillerbrand, op. cit., p. 29.

Again, for both men the immediacy of revelation is primary, as opposed to the second-hand revelation which is possible through Scripture or Tradition. They raised to a fever pitch the tension between the conscience of the community and the conscience of the individual believer, between orthodox and heterodox charisma. By thus forcing the Church to clarify this tension, Fox and Muntzer may have made their most striking contribution.

On the one hand, from the earliest commissioning of the disciples, the unique witness of the individual is highly prized, over and above that kind of repetitive and authoritarian witness of the Pharisees "Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribe and Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom" (Matthew 5:20). Yet on the other hand, the disciples and followers are not given totally free rein, being warned to "Try the Spirits, to see whether they be of God" (I John 4:1), and to "Beware of false prophets" (Matthew 7:15). In the early days of the movement, this warning and overseeing function was served by the remembrance of the historical Jesus; as the years became centuries, the Church of the delayed parousia formulated doctrines to carry on this function.

This "guarding oversight, continued through doctrine" was not, however, designed to eliminate personal creativity and daring from the witness of the individual believer. Rather, it was designed to preserve the give-and-take relationship between contemporary witnessing and the primordial events. The charisma of Fox and Muntzer seems to abandon that relationship.

Arthur Ford, Disciples of Christ clergyman, and the "medium"

through whom Bishop James Pike has recently claimed "contact" with his deceased son Jim, may provide a modern example of this Fox/Muntzer supra-ecclesiastical tendency. In an address given November 18, 1968, he said "I am a heretic; because any man who has ever contributed anything to religious thought has been a heretic, because he keeps his mind open."⁵⁵ Certainly this is a caricature of the integrity-preserving function of doctrine, and another example of the idealization of dissent. The investigator would maintain, in countering this caricature, that orthodoxy can also be daring and creative, that orthodox doctrines are predominantly pro-life in intention, and that what heresies have lacked in the past is a lively sense of responsiveness to the whole "movement" or drama of the Church. Heresies tend to ignore the corrective screen of Tradition, and thus lack the ballast of the corporate structure--the earthen vessel with its treasure.

Doctrines are theological starting-places.

The contradiction between the announced intent of this subsection and that of the whole chapter (the case for doctrinal limit-setting) is one of appearance only. This is because to insist on beginning with doctrine is in itself to set limits, i.e., an unbridled freedom-of-thought approach could begin wherever it chose. Ideally, it would seem that the initiate (catechumen) should relate to doctrine in

⁵⁵ Given at the School of Theology at Claremont, California, Mr. Ford's remarks were characterized by a defensive absolutism which may not represent his best thinking; e.g., "The only thing which distinguishes Christianity from the other religions is the total survival of the person after death."

the same fashion as doctrines themselves have related to the primal events (the Hebrew past, the historical Jesus, the founding of the Church, etc.).

The view of orthodoxy which is emerging in the mind of the investigator is that of relationship-to-a-process, as opposed to "conformity to a body of verbal interpretations". This orthodoxy would be more visceral than verbal, more behavioural than theological--which means that it would seldom be fit subject for testing against doctrinal or creedal norms (as, e.g., the Apostle's Creed has been used in ferreting out heretics). To consider this approach is to raise immediately the historic distinction between Visible and Invisible Church. As Augustine noted, "Many who seem to be without are within, and many who seem to be within are without."⁵⁶

Sebastien Castellio (died 1563) who rose to protest the burning of Michael Servetus, may in his own experience demonstrate this distinction. Identified as the author of the Bellian heresy⁵⁷ he wrote Concerning Heretics, Whether They Are to Be Persecuted, a treatise against Calvin's policies, and On the Art of Doubting. To him, persecution constituted an absolute denial of the gospel.

. . .before the sacrifice of Christ God had compassion on guilty Nineveh, how much more now on innocent babes! God draws, urges, invites, and persuades. The imitation of this heavenly Father leads us to love our enemies and to err on the side of mercy.

⁵⁶De Baptismo V, 38, translated and noted in Greenslade, op. cit., p. 182.

⁵⁷Roland H. Bainton, The Travail of Religious Liberty (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 97-124.

Christ likewise was so meek that to seek a warrant from his example for putting to death heretics with the sword is like trying to discover a case of a lamb eating a wolf.⁵⁸

His revolt led him to define heresy very loosely as simply that with which one is in disagreement,⁵⁹ and to emphasize the Invisible Church as the primary entity. "Those who are in this Church recognize it as a musician recognizes music and sings in accord."⁶⁰ Again, Calvin and Castellio represent a polarization in which one strong reaction (Calvin's Church-State experiment in Geneva) triggers an equal and opposite reaction. Neither were able to compromise on an ecclesia mixta which could functionally accomodate both wheat and tares. Perhaps it is idealistic to suggest that, the sixteenth century being as turbulent as it was, such an accomodation was realistically possible. Calvin was apparently as afraid of religious libertinism⁶¹ as Castellio was of a uniquely Protestant form of totalitarianism, the likes of which he had fled in Lyons, France.

Two necessities seem to historically impinge upon the Christian movement: (1) recognizing that the essence of true Christianity is largely an intangible, unpredictable, phenomenon, it is necessary to allow maximum freedom for each catechumen or convent to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling", and (2) recognizing that the Church must declare itself functionally as having a rightful voice in

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 115.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 115.

⁶¹Ross William Collins, Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1968).

the affairs of men and nations, it is necessary to establish clear, predictable distinctions between the Church and the resident culture. This second necessity encompasses the "Visible Church" idea, and requires the setting up of membership standards, creedal formulae, tests for admission to the sacraments--which in a real sense often militates against the first necessity which is by nature more open-ended. This is the point at which an ecclesiology meets its severest ordeal; is the Christian community for the sake of survival willing to compromise between these contra-pletive necessities?⁶²

Martin Luther certainly made the attempt to work out a viable compromise, but was apparently forced by the insurgent peasant nationalism to return primary emphasis to the second necessity, i.e., the requirements of the visible Church. Thus, at Augsburg, he abandons his earlier views of religious liberty articulated in Concerning Secular Authority. "Christ desires to have a voluntary band of followers uncoerced, neither driven by law nor by the sword."⁶³ Had the times been less turbulent, Luther may have arrived at a compromise similar to

⁶²This very useful term "contrapletion", has been worked out philosophically by Dr. Roderick Scott, of Pilgrim Place, Claremont, California, and shared with the investigator. The term is distinguished from either "paradox" or "contradiction" (both of which serve to set up a literary apposition), in that the apparent "opposites" are actually necessary for the survival of each other. Thus day and night are contrapletive in that it is impossible to define the one without making use of the other. In the same fashion, the visible Church may be considered dependent upon the invisible, and vice versa; this could functionally guard against sectarianism on the one hand, and ecclesiasticism on the other.

⁶³Garrison, op. cit., p. 126. The author discusses Luther's concession at Augsburg on page 131.

that of the Left-Wing reformers who chose the institution of The Ban over against the sword of the secular arm (magistrate). As Michael Sattler of the Swiss Brethren put it in The Schleithem Confession (1527),

. . . The ban shall be employed with all those who have given themselves to the Lord, to work in His commandments, and with all those who are baptized into the one body of Christ and who are called brethren or sisters, and yet who slip sometimes and fall into error and sin, being inadvertently overtaken. The same shall be admonished twice in secret and the third time openly disciplined or banned according to the command of Christ, Matt. 18.

Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force, such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use either for friends or against one's enemies--by virtue of the word of Christ, Resist not him that is evil.

In the perfection of Christ, however, only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned, without putting the flesh to death--simply the warning and the command to sin no more.⁶⁴

But despite these functional differences over how to preserve their movements from error, and over how to organize the priorities of the visible and invisible Church, it is likely that the goals of the reformers were comparable. Calvin, Luther, Castellio and Sattler could have probably agreed that the purpose of orthodoxy was to keep the message of the early church alive and operative in every cultural present. For them, orthodoxy was more a matter of spirit and action--how the believer responds to the Word--than it was a matter of correct thinking about the Bible, the Pope, the nature of the Christian life,

⁶⁴Leith, op. cit., pp. 284, 285, 287, 288.

etc. Whereas the visible Church could be firm about distinguishing truth from error, orthodoxy from heresy, there was little question but that the final determination of who belongs to the invisible Church would forever belong to God.

It is in this light that Bishop James A. Pike can be understood when he says "Fewer beliefs; more belief." His plea is for an orthodoxy which plunges beneath the verbal affirmations required by the visible Church to an immediate engagement with the Gospel. In the following quotation it can be seen that Pike does not mean to devalue the normative role of doctrine, but rather to destroy the misuse of doctrines as thought-pilgrimage terminators. In other words, the ability to recite affirmatively the great doctrines of the Church may lead to the stultifying illusion of right relationship to the Lord of the Church.

. . .In almost every Church what the outsider confronts is a complex series of doctrinal propositions, . . .a thick holy book of diverse materials with varying degrees of clarity and obfuscation, and in some Churches a complicated scheme of public worship.

That every interested seeker is not about to buy the whole package is not surprising. Rather, what is surprising is that so many do, or seem to. But when they do, without discrimination, they simply add to the number who have finalized the unfinal, who are buttresses to ecclesiastical rigidity, who become denominational guardians, who join in the cry of "heresy" when relative and non-essential things are questioned, who resist reform and renewal. Many "join the Church" knowing little--and caring little--about these refinements, feeling that the institution is generally good and helpful, but missing the challenge and power at the heart of the matter.

As we shall see, there is a legitimate role for most of these relative and secondary aspects of religion; it is their worship as absolutes that is the roadblock. . . .There is only one Ultimate: God as known and experienced in His over-all claim, His mighty acts. To make anything else ultimate is idolatry. Anything else: whether a particular doctrinal formulation, a particular book or books, a particular scheme of church government, a particular office or

person, a particular ethical rule, a particular way of worship. None of these is an essential of the Gospel. And it is the Gospel we are to commend to others.⁶⁵

Even while making allowances for Pike's indebtedness to Paul Tillich, as well as for his defensive style, the foregoing passage suggests a vision of the Church as dynamic rather than passive, futuristic rather than tradition-bound. In this frame of reference, tradition would serve as ballast but not blindfold. Doctrine would serve as primer but not absolute. Heresy would have to be broadened to include those who only center down on "right belief" without pursuing the lively relationship between those beliefs and the primordial events to which they are intended to bear witness. The chief heresy in this light is an undialogical frame of mind, an attitude of self-congratulating righteousness, of faith as private possession.

Pope Paul VI may have unwittingly provided this study with a classic example of the kind of undialogical frame of mind which Pike so rails against--and realistically speaking, into which all Christians sometimes fall. In an article honoring the passing of Karl Barth, a Newsweek correspondent wrote,

Two years ago, Barth studied the Latin text of Vatican II's documents, then went to Rome with questions of his own. At the Holy Office, he obtained the Curia's conservative view of the council, then visited progressive Jesuit theologians, and finally spoke in private with Pope Paul VI. Barth seized the opportunity to discuss Mariology, telling the Pope how he preferred St. Joseph

⁶⁵ James A. Pike, A Time For Christian Candor (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 24.

to Mary as the prototype of the church. The Pontiff, he later wrote, "assured me he would pray for me, that in my advanced age I would be given deeper insight into this problem."⁶⁶

But again, this may not be a good example, since the Pope may have been speaking as a person responsible for the maintenance of the visible Church, (which seems to demand cloture at times), rather than as a participant with Barth in the invisible Body of Christ whose boundaries are known only to God. It seems highly unlikely that the Pope has never entertained doubts about the full-blown Marilology to which his generation of church men is heir. Apparently, in his encounter with Barth, he made the functional decision to act out of a defensive rather than witness-bearing (confessional) manner--or perhaps no conscious decision at all was made, just reflex. Considered in its worst possible light, the Pope's attitude was one of condescending and hostile paternalism e.g., "I will not sully myself with a full consideration of your views." Such an attitude would constitute a serious crack in "the earthen vessel with its treasure," when judged by the legitimations of doctrine set forth in this chapter--especially "doctrine as theological starting place".

But to press this consideration to a deeper level, it may be that to live out of the invisible church idea, with all of its dialogue and freedom, is to assume a luxury which in the give-and-take of a competitive world is not readily available. That is to say that the kinds of witness-bearing openness of a living-room dialogue are not realistically possible in the larger arena of the clash of thought systems;

⁶⁶Newsweek (December 23, 1968), 63.

e.g. when an archbishop is trying to negotiate the release of a missionary priest held by Marxist guerillas. Such occasions seem to require the display of power more than the passivity of a "confessional attitude". Even Barth, whose theology provided the background for the 1934 Barmen Declaration protest against the Third Reich,⁶⁷ would likely grant this as a practical necessity. The Church "under attack" is more likely to assert its visible structure than it is to defend itself with mystical claims about the "numberless hosts who quietly make up the Body of Christ". Barth can afford to have charity for a Pope who sees himself as standing in the breach holding back a worldwide collapse of authority.

In the light of these realistic dynamics, what seems to be called for is a concept of heresy which not only takes deviation from the great Christian motifs seriously, but also makes "allowances" for the functional pressures under which individual Christians must operate. Such "allowances" could fall under the category of caritas, or the generosity of Christian charity, and they would not be purchased at the expense of watering down the great motifs of the faith. Rather, they would draw their strength from the humility common to the communion table (eucharist), and from the contemplation of the sufferings on the Cross. Jones, from his Quaker vantage point, may express in the following the rightful relation between heresy and charity where he writes,

⁶⁷Leith, op. cit., pp. 517-522. Declaring opposition to the spectre of a National Church subordinate to the Nazi regime, this document claims, "The Christian must listen to Jesus Christ and to him alone." This too is "undialogical" if taken at face value.

We cannot bodily lift and take over for our spiritual uses the religious setting or the intellectual outlook of any former period. . .we must work out our own Church, our own faith, our own body of thought. . . .

There is, then, no way of getting a fixed and static standard which settles outright and automatically what is heresy and who is heretic. We all deviate from Christ.⁶⁸

Of course, both Barth and the Pope would contend with Jones over his apparently flippant attitude toward the Tradition, but the repentant attitude they could probably affirm. Jones clearly envisions the Tradition as normative, and grants the Church the prerogative of setting doctrinal standards; this he does at least implicitly by using the term "deviate", and by writing appreciatively of "heretics" who have forced the Church to define herself. He does not, however, regard the visible church as the primary entity, preferring to define the Church as a heroic and indomitable movement whose power is often hidden.

A further way of considering the judgments of heresy in relation to the demands of charity is suggested by apologists who see creeds and doctrines as symbol-systems whose vitality must be experienced by every believer's imagination. That is to say, the believer must imaginatively invest himself into the great themes of the Faith before those themes can become operative in his experience, and hence before he can be called a person "of faith". Pious repetition, though perhaps serving an introductory or didactic function, cannot substitute for that experience in which the believer is "grasped" or "claimed" by, for example, the Incarnation. This position is articulated by Paul

⁶⁸ Jones, op. cit., p. Underlining is mine.

Tillich who sees doctrines as having power because of their archetypal character, rather than because of their literal veracity.

The first step towards the non-religion of the Western World was made by religion itself. When it defended its great symbols, not as symbols but as literal stories, it had already lost the battle. In doing so the theologian. . .helped to transfer the powerful expressions of depth into object or happenings on the horizontal plane. There the symbols lose their power and meaning and become an easy prey to physical, biological and historical attack.⁶⁹

Heresy, for this kind of framework, would be seen as "failure" of the imagination", i.e., he who cannot or will not imagine his way into the great symbols excludes himself from the Christian movement. Literalists, dogmatists, and all others who claim the certitude of direct access to the undiluted faith would thus occupy the first lines of heresy, along with those whose rationalism causes them to deny mystery as a valid dimension of the Faith.

From a less theological point of view, psychologist Ira Progoff expands this theme to make a vigorous imagination the precondition of adult maturity; a man is "saved", or becomes "whole" precisely because he has a well-developed mythology.⁷⁰ Archetypes, defined as images based upon deep human experience, provide the essential substance for culture and religion--the "stuff" upon which the psyche must "cut its first teeth". He who by-passes this process of grappling with primordial images (Progoff maintains that the symbol "God" is shared by all

⁶⁹Paul Tillich, "The Lost Dimension in Religion", Saturday Evening Post (June 14, 1958) quoted in Margaret Isherwood, Faith Without Dogma (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 65.

⁷⁰These ideas were explored in an address, "The Credo of a Depth Psychologist", given at the School of Theology, Claremont, California December 12, 1968

men) fails to become a human being. Faith, for this kind of approach, involves trusting that the primordial images (which by their unpredictability can be very frightening) have a primary right to be "worked out", i.e., they cannot be put down, repressed, without severe repercussions. In scriptural parlance, failure to work dialogically with these primordial images will produce that death which is the wage of sin.

Orthodoxy, in this light, would be considered a fluid and continuing process by which the believer reflects upon his most basic experiences, considering their relation to the dominant themes in his faith. For most persons, the motifs of "sin and salvation", "judgment and forgiveness", "death and resurrection", will find ready counterparts among the primordial experiences common to men. A man "of faith" would thus be more at home with the dynamic imagery of his own dreams, than he would be with the intricacies of medieval scholasticism.

Susanne K. Langer,⁷¹ writes of this myth-making capability as the chief distinction and prerogative of the human species, a faculty even more basic than sexuality.

. . . I believe there is a primary need in man, which other creatures probably do not have, and which actuates all his apparently unzoological aims, his wistful fancies, his consciousness of value, his utterly impractical enthusiasms, and his awareness of a "Beyond" filled with holiness.

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⁷¹Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy In A New Key (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1962).

This basic need, . . . is the need of symbolization. . . . It is the fundamental process of his mind, and goes on all the time. Sometimes we are aware of it, sometimes we merely find its results, and realize that certain experiences have passed through our brains and have been digested there.

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. . . It symbolization is the starting point of all intellection in the human sense, and is more general than thinking, fancying or taking action. For the brain is not merely a great transmitter, a super-switchboard; it is better likened to a great transformer. The current of experience that passes through it undergoes a change of character, not through the agency of the sense by which the perception entered, but by virtue of a primary use which is made of it immediately; it is sucked into the stream of symbols which constitutes a human mind.⁷²

For this kind of view, orthodoxy would involve the conscious intrusion of the great symbols of the faith into this psychic melting-pot in such a manner that they have a "fighting chance" of surviving the encounter and becoming part of a functioning life-style on the conscious level. Liturgy, the sacraments, meditation, and conscious acts of obedience could serve periodically to re-introduce the themes of the faith into the melting-pot. Again, this is an extremely dynamic view of faith, one which allows and even requires a continuing inner argumentation on the part of the believer. Heresy, by extrapolation, would involve the conscious decision to cease introducing the themes of the faith into the psyche, or to call a halt to the inner argumentation.

Samuel Miller works out some of the implications for the view of faith suggested by the foregoing thinkers: Tillich, Proffoff, Langer. This he does for American Protestantism when, for example, he writes that the loss of the dimension of mystery "is manifested in the

⁷²Ibid., pp. 45, 46.

reduction of worship to an ecclesiastical entertainment unattended by awe or contrition."⁷³ He speaks wistfully of the medieval church, in which simple believers could celebrate the unifying vision of their life's meaning in the drama of the Passion Narrative. Instead, we now suffer under a much more one-dimensional approach.

What embarrasses us is the atrophy of our symbolic imagination. For the most part it is assumed that imagination is to be associated only with the production of fiction. Reality, on the other hand is best described by discursive or analytical reason. . . . We simply no longer believe in the trustworthiness of images as instruments for the exploration or the expression of truth.⁷⁴

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We have images, plenty of them. They run from Cadillacs to filtered cigarettes, from pink telephones to swank hotels, murder, snakepits, and high-priced asininity. The only difficulty is that they are all cheap images, cheap in the sense of lacking richness of meaning. They have no depth, no height. They solve nothing, have no significance, are a burden, a bore, a deceit.⁷⁵

To regain orthodoxy, Miller suggests a revival or recovery of the imagination in which the ancient symbols can once again thunder with the power of their universality. Particularly needful is the recovery of the tragic element in the midst of life, an element which has been largely destroyed by rationalistic science, by technological arrogance, and (in the churches) by optimistic and romantic sentimentalism.

Whatever it is that constitutes the potency of an image to draw together the uncomfortable and even frightening contradictions of this world, it must be said that the tragic nature of existence cannot be evaded. This is what spoke so profoundly and perpetually

⁷³Samuel Miller, The Dilemma of Modern Belief (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 12.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 30.

to the ages from the Christian symbol of the crucifix. Here all the terror-ridden conflicts of human history met in One whose response transformed them, reconciled them in the sense that mankind, however perplexed by the rational questions involved, found an existential answer of such magnitude and strength that the stalemate on one level was broken and a break-through was afforded the human spirit.

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The death of tragedy in our culture coincides with the rise of the doctrine of man's perfectibility and of social progress.⁷⁶

Miller's defense of Christian symbols may be argued with on several grounds without invalidating the point. The crucifix, for example, was operative as a unifying symbol during the same period with the Crusades, the Inquisition, and Church-inspired pogroms against Jews. But again, these repressive phenomena may have risen more from sociological than from theological or symbolic factors. Miller sees the Church as afflicted with a devastating spiritual impoverishment which can be remedied only by a recovery of the vigorous life of imagination.

Doctrine is still necessary.

The beginning of this chapter was a discussion of the kind of generalized serious attitude which could be maintained by the pressure of doctrinal limitations or expectations; "Doctrines assume that ideas have consequences". The chief heresy for that section of the chapter was, in sum, "a flippant disregard for the doctrinal heritage, as if these were mere abstractions without social consequence". Orthodoxy, on the other hand, was seen as loyalty to both the content of the doctrinal heritage, and the spirit of that heritage, i.e., the believer's

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 31, 32.

response is not only one of repeating or affirming the ancient affirmations, but of creating his own unique interpretation of the history which he now claims as "his own."

The second section dealt with the realistic danger of self-styled individualists who would exploit the heritage in a pick-and-choose fashion, without regard for the "balances" which are built into the corporate heritage. Thus Arius was condemned because he denied the transcendent dimension in Jesus which was part of the earliest synoptic recollections. Heresy was seen as arrogant individualism, and the "idealization of dissent" was critically examined. Christian "charisma" was distinguished from heterodox creativity on the grounds that it has a more "corporate" base, and a greater sense of the paradoxes involved.

The third section sought to vindicate doctrines as necessary beginning places for the believer's imaginative reflection--this as opposed to considering doctrines as thought-terminating devices. Orthodoxy has to do with imaginatively investing oneself into the mystery of Christian symbolism; heresy has to do with the failure of the imagination, the deliberate imposing of cloture on the inner argumentation so that the symbols no longer "speak".

The major defenses of the process by which the Church has sought to preserve its integrity, namely through the careful formulation of doctrinal limitations, may be summed up in the following sketch: doctrines in the main seek to maintain a series of tensions in the life of the Church. The tensions to be kept alive include the following; Scripture versus Tradition, the individual conscience versus the corporate "conscience" of the community (ecclesia), historical

precedents versus the ethical requirements of the contemporary situation, visible versus invisible visions of the Body of Christ (ecclesiasticism versus sectarianism), the tyranny of theological absolutism versus the chaos of syncretism or relativism, the historical content of the faith versus the contemporary forms of witness-bearing (Biblical scholarship versus theology and worship), legalism or moralism versus libertinism or privatism, judgment versus forgiveness, discipline versus charity.

According to the investigator, the maintenance of these several tensions or polarizations is a kind of contrapletive interdependence is what doctrines are basically about. Clearly enough, not all doctrines have served this positive function in the past, and probably every major doctrine has at one time or another been impressed into a repressive or thought-terminating usage. Some doctrines represent what from a contemporary vantage point appears to have been "premature cloture brought down upon a debate over an embarrassingly open question". But granting this kind of objection, the investigator nevertheless contends that the process of formulating and bearing witness to doctrines and creeds is vital to the survival of the Church as a self-conscious and purposive movement. Furthermore, the incidence of heresy charges and proceedings, in the main, has given testimony to the seriousness with which the Church has regarded the process out of which doctrines arise and take form. To say "no" to heresy proceedings--or more precisely, to eliminate flatly the attempt to define the outer limits of the Faith (heresy)--is in one sense to abandon that process which has enabled the

Church to survive to date as a corporate entity. It is to say "no" to self-definition as primary task.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE RECOVERY OF "HERESY"

This chapter seeks to go beyond the filtering process which has dominated the study thus far to a full statement of the investigator's diagnosis. This diagnosis takes on the character of urgent prognosis, and it can be summed up in the following: without the recovery of some sense of the possibility of being heretical, the prospects for a revitalized and normative American Protestant Ecclesiology (complete with back-bone and teeth) are exceedingly dim.

Heresy and survival: the appeal to self-interest.

Describing the failures brought on by the erosion of theological distinction in American Churches, Martin Marty writes,

Their frequent attempts to become all things to all men theologically often result in their becoming little to any of them. . . . The resource of judgment and hope is spread so thin that in time of crisis the people are left with generalities. Nor does the theology of this type of church seem capable of generating ideas for a second generation. Reproduction is an enduring problem of hybrids. It is an unnecessary price many have paid; that they have paid it is an almost universal observation.¹

This is somewhat dated satire (1959), but the content continues to ring clear: theological distinctions are required for the very survival of the Church. This, as opposed to the kind of etherialized neutrality or dogmatic tentativeness which makes it somehow indecent to make up one's mind. Or as playwright Samuel Beckett has it,

¹Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), pp. 148-149. Underlining is mine.

I take no sides. I am interested in the shape of ideas. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine: "Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned." That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters.²

To strike out in this fashion is not, however, to supplant the need for contact with that moist openness which lies at the heart of human curiosity. With Beckett, the shape does indeed matter. But Beckett at the same time lives in a world of choices to which are attached grave consequences. It is at this point that it seems necessary to admit that a kind of cloture is basic to and implicit within the Christian way of approaching life: not all questions can be left "hanging" in a state of suspension. This, despite that fact that in an affluent society it is quite possible to avoid those situations which regularly call forth functional moral decision-making. Or as poet John Berryman has pointed out, ". . . in the new situation man can live his entire life in America without finding out whether or not he is a coward."³

A re-awakening of the perils of heresy might serve to provide occasion for determining "whether or not one is a coward" quite early in the Christian life. A dose of martyrology might be of great profit in catechetical instruction, the Church could be seen from the beginning as more than a benevolent picnic, or an ad hoc committee for social services. In this vein, the chief heresy would be related to a deliberate, conscious turning-away-from the stream of Tradition, the march of the universal Church. This view of heresy could hopefully

²Ibid., p. 106.

³Ibid., p. 60.

maintain itself without violating the Protestant Principle (absolutizing of relativities--in this case, the Tradition with all its variety). To this extent, Protestantism could be opened up to a more equalized balance of Scripture and Tradition, as opposed to being solely "the people of the BOOK". Heresy, then, would be involved in the refusal to admit that the Bible itself is the creation of the Church--and hence, that Tradition is prior to and more fundamental than Scripture.

Heresy, when serving in this capacity, provides a "didactic pressure" i.e., the convert cannot rightly assault the society with his "Christianizing" affirmations without having first "done business with" the Tradition in at least some of its ironic, vindictive, triumphant manifestations. This, of course, puts the burden upon Christian Education, and upon membership requirements, subsuming as it does the conviction that knowledge is basic to faith. Or as Elizabeth O'Connor says in her study of the Church of The Saviour, Washington, D. C., "The refusal to grapple with the issue of entrance into the Christian Church is not tolerance; it is betrayal of the gospel which we preach."⁴

If the church is to move toward integrity of membership, a framework must be provided prior to membership in which the Christian faith may be explored with seriousness. Within this framework a person must have the opportunity to know deep person-to-person relationships. He must have the opportunity in a community of acceptance and love to see himself, to let go his false saviours that he may come to know the real saviour.⁵

Through this kind of exposure, the catechumen might be expected

⁴Elizabeth O'Connor, Call To Commitment (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 25.

⁵Ibid.

to sense clearly the limitations implied in the Christian style, i.e., that he stands within a history (both as representative and as sharer-of-the-common-guilt), and that he henceforth is to take his primary cues for living from among the major themes of that history (as opposed to taking them from religion-in-general or passing revivalists). This implies that throughout his life as professing Christian, the initiate will bear about with him the constructive anxiety about the integrity of his relation as Christian to the shared history--anxiety lest he be the one who dilutes or distorts the major themes which have cost the ecclesia so much to preserve.

From a strictly interpersonal point of view the above-mentioned "constructive anxiety" can help to maintain a healthy scepticism in the believer; not that he cannot entertain and celebrate confidence in that which he has been given by the Tradition, but that he is always in awareness that his access to the "true faith" is a limited and incomplete one. Thus, the dogmatism produced by a "full assurance of salvation", or by the certainty that "outside the Church there is no salvation", can be held in check. As Randall Stewart puts it in his discussion of the uneasy scepticism of Herman Melville:

"Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief" has been the prayer of many a good doubting Christian since it was first prayed (in Mark 9:24) by the father of the possessed child. There can, indeed, be no Christian faith worthy of the name (unless it be among the cherubim and seraphim) without this struggle between belief and unbelief; and there can be no true human sympathy without it.⁶

⁶ Nathan A. Scott (ed.) The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. 241. Underlining is mine.

If it is true that there is a causal relationship between the quality of "human sympathy" characteristic of a community and that community's ability to survive and perpetuate its major purposes in society, then Steward's call for scepticism has an eschatological urgency about it: "Doubt or die". It is the investigator's opinion that such healthy doubting is most likely to occur where the possibility of heresy (betraying the gospel) functions as a "didactic pressure", always forcing the believer to temper his affirmations with both sympathy and self-critical reflectiveness.

The awareness of possible heresy can also feed into an eagerness for primary data, a welcoming of results from historical or psychological research. Had such an "eagerness" predominated when Peter Abelard produced his Sic et Non, he would not likely have been condemned. Apparently the sense that the corporate structure of the Church could itself be in heresy was missing at that time--as it has been many times since. As an example, Borden Parker Bowne was charged with heresy in 1904 at the New York East Conference Session of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This, the last major heresy trial in American Methodism, ended in a dismissal of charges that he was heretical regarding the Trinity, the atonement, biblical miracles, the punishment of sinners, and original sin. Subsequent investigation and reflection may bear out the assumption that Bowne's chief error (in the minds of those who brought charges against him) lay in the roving vigor of his mind, and his eagerness for a purified understanding of the faith. As George Albert Coe wrote of him,

He turned multitudes of minds away from religious, theological, and metaphysical conventionalities toward certain of the living, dynamic realities of experience. In spite of his strong liking for dialectic, . . . I believe that we are nearer the truth, and nearer his own conception of himself, if we remember him most for the eagerness and the pointedness with which he reverted to primary data.⁷

As has been pointed out earlier, this kind of "eagerness" produces institutional anxieties--precisely because the results are unpredictable (in the case of Methodism, hardline Wesleyans might have to suffer the shock of finding out that John Wesley had several Achilles' heels). For the Episcopal communion in America, the reaction against Bishop Pike may be partly generated by his intense "eagerness" for data; who, in fact, among all the churches is ready to welcome Pike's discovery that:

. . . there tends to be more race discrimination among churchgoers than among people who never or seldom attend church.⁸

In sum, a reawakened sense of the possibility of betraying the substance of Christianity brings a standard of judgment to bear upon both sectarian privatism and orthodox dogmatism. In fact, if heresy is really alive in the sense of "a roving standard of judgment" no corner of the Church can complacently avoid occasional assaults upon its credentials. Thus, when American churches begin to congratulate themselves about their superiority to the European Churches who capitulated to Hitler, the tables are soon turned by the Civil Rights movement which reveals the utter failure of American churches in the area

⁷George Albert Coe, "The Empirical Factor in Bowne's Thinking", Methodist Review (May-June, 1922), 381.

⁸William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, The Bishop Pike Affair (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 255.

of human rights/social justice. Or to put this contention into a poetic form,

The Body of Christ is less comfortable now than it was when it hung on the cross.⁹

Heresy: guardian of Ecclesiology.

In the course of this study the observation has grown that most heresies, past and present, involve a denial of the corporate universality of the ecclesia, coupled with a predisposition toward private, localized, claims to final Authority. To make this observation is to cut both at Roman monopoly (papal infallibility) and Protestant sectarianism ("God and my own opinion comprise a majority"). In the following pages, the investigator will sketch some outlines for a firm ecclesiology which might avoid either tendency, and provide resilient models for the Church of the future whether Protestant, Catholic, or simply Universal.

Hartshorne may point out the direction when, in taking cracks at both Protestantism and Catholicism, he lays a bouquet at the feet of Sigmund Freud:

Freud has reminded us: "Religion is an illusion. The world is not a nursery, virtue does not pay, the reward of the faithful may be a cross of pain." These are among the harsh facts that religion seeks to minimize if not evade altogether with its consolation of "pie in the sky by and by", facts that are part of the offense of the Gospel--the offense of the Cross, which the Christian religion regularly seeks to eradicate by setting itself up as the means of grace. . . .

⁹This line has been done into a colorful serigraph by Sister Mary Corita Kent, an art teacher at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles.

Religion confirms our prejudices, blesses our pretensions, and assures us that God is on our side. The continuing witness of honest men has been to the vanity and folly of such ego centrism.¹⁰

In contrast to this, Bruce Metzger, writing on "The Teaching of the New Testament Concerning the Nature of the Church" says,

. . . one of the most characteristic names of Christians in Acts is "the disciples" (mathetai),--literally "learners".¹¹

This is certainly a compelling image when seen in the light of subsequent dogmatisms. Not, of course, that the members of the Early Church lacked confidence in what "they had seen and heard", or that they were consistently dialogical in their representation or evangelization. Rather, in Luke's observation the "learning" stance most characterized the first Christians. They were people who sensed that the full implication of what they had experienced would not soon be worked out in any finalized form. It is important for modern Christians to realize that despite the fluidity of the "learning" posture, it is still abundantly possible to make society-shaking affirmations; truth need not be regarded as finally known before it can aggressively salt its way into the environment.

A similar approach to a firm ecclesiology is taken by Anders Nygren.

Any simile is imperfect, but we may perhaps venture a simile to illustrate the relation of Christianity to the changes and chances of human life, and the extent to which it is influenced by different ages and cultures. We must not, however, compare it to a stone

¹⁰Holmes Hartshorne, The Faith To Doubt (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 27, 28.

¹¹Robert McAfee Brown and David H. Scott (eds.) The Challenge To Reunion (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 51.

thrown into the water, which affects its environment by setting up undulations, but which itself remains unchanging and impenetrable. . . Christianity may rather be compared to a plant, which builds up its organism by taking into itself and assimilating materials from its environment. The plant preserves its own structure in all circumstances. . .yet at the same time. . .it can assume the most varied form according to the soil, the climate, the season, and so forth. The birch is a good example.¹²

In this light the Church may take on a thousand new forms for each new cultural environment, assured that so long as its genetic rootage is unaltered it will remain uniquely "the Church". Again, the importance of the root is underscored; like the birch, it is to be the Church and nothing else. The investigator finds this imagery much preferable to that of petros, the "rock" upon which Christ is to build his Church. A rock is a static foundational symbol, lacking the idea that mutuality is to be expected between the Church and every cultural present. The plant imagery, on the other hand, seems more in keeping with the wheat-and-tares and "the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" imagery--and more in line with the ancient Hebrew and modern Protestant proscriptions against the idolatry of form.

Another possible direction in which a firm ecclesiology might develop is along the lines of "a community of Judgment and Forgiveness, Cross and Resurrection, Law and Gospel". That is to say, the Church is present wherever these tensions are in operation in a given community--and absent whenever these tensions have died. For example, when a community bearing the Christian nomenclature deteriorates into a "mutual admiration society", and where the Word and Sacrament are drained of

¹²Anders Nygren, Essence of Christianity (London: Epworth Press, 1960), p. 11-13.

any sense of incipient judgment--there the Church is absent. Somehow the sense of urgency common to the primitive Christian community must be maintained; as D. T. Niles says of that era, "Every known landmark was in danger because of Jesus."¹³

To suggest this kind of model for the Church seems to clash with the apparent security of private devotion and piety, and to the extent that these represent a retreating life-style (from "the agonies of the world") this clash can be validated. To phrase it in prose, we turn for help when our foundations are shaking, only to learn that it is God who is shaking them. Or as J. D. Salinger writes in Franny and Zooey, "You're constitutionally unable to love or understand any son of God who throws tables around."¹⁴

This is not to state that it is wrong for the Church to offer comfort, solace, or even "peace of mind" to believers; only these gifts are to be kept in the perspective of the perceived truth of the Tradition--a truth which has an inescapable abrasive at its center.

A final model for the recovery of a firm ecclesiology is that of the Visible Church, the skeleton of the institutional structure. Protestantism is afflicted with a prejudice against this as a commanding model, and to its detriment. Like the human family, the Church needs corporate structures for the nourishment and vigor of all its members,

¹³D. T. Niles, Who Is This Jesus? (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 45.

¹⁴J. D. Salinger, Franny and Zooey (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), p. 165.

and the corporate structure, in turn, is impoverished when a member is cut off in isolation. As Daniel D. Walker sees it,

The church as we know it is an institution with all of the sins and battle scars appertaining thereto.

And that is a good thing. Institutions are no more evil than skeletons are. Both have the job of holding life together and keeping it upright so that it can go somewhere. To be sure, both are subject to arthritic rigidity and cancerous deterioration. But . . . institutions, even big institutions, are not evil per se. They are a necessary part of human society and can be abandoned only at subhuman levels.¹⁵

To suggest this institutional model is not necessarily to devalue those informal groups of Christians who have "become" the Church under pressures which have not allowed for the development of highly "visible" corporate structure. In some instances, institutional "skeleton" is a luxury completely denied. Ernest Gordon describes such a situation which arose in a concentration camp in Burma during World War II. In a chapter on "Church Without Walls" he writes,

I do not know when the church at Chungkai was built. Perhaps "built" is not the right word, for it was no more than a clearing in the jungle. It had for a roof the great vault of the firmament and for its walls the forest of bamboo. There were no doors. One could enter at any point. It was all door.

.....

The church was a fellowship of those who came in freedom and love, to acknowledge their weakness, to seek a presence, and to pray for their fellows. The Confession of Jesus Christ as Lord was the one requirement for membership.

.....

¹⁵Daniel Day Walker, Enemy In The Pew (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 156, 157.

. . . Such a church had the atmosphere not of law court nor of classroom but of divine humanity. It existed wherever there was Christ's love. The physical temple and the doctrinal affirmation institutional skeleton are needed--but both are dead without the church that is communion, the fellowship of God's people.¹⁶

This passage is remarkable in that despite the extraordinary vitality of this communion-under-fire, Gordon does not suggest that a "wall-less" church is possible or even desirable for the church under other conditions. What matters is whether or not the "structure" (in this case a deceptively "loose" one) can carry the freight of the gospel into the heart of the cultural present. Gordon seems to recognize that without the cohesive pressure of a common eschatological urgency (how will the Japanese dispose of us?) such vitality as developed could not have been possible. Without these pressures, other forms of cohesive pressure such as doctrinal norms, liturgy, membership requirements would have been called for. Functionally speaking, the brutality of the concentration camp itself provided the firm walls for this wall-less church; there was enough external authority bearing in upon each "member" to make it possible for the church to survive with a bare minimum of internal authority.

But whether the authority-center is external or internal the fact remains: the Body of Christ requires skeletal structure, some form of institutional self-ordering.

Heresy and freedom.

At first glance, the word "heresy" is an utter denial of

¹⁶Ernest Gordon, Through the Valley of the Kwai (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 173, 174.

freedom; a man has no right to think outside certain bounds. And yet from the very beginning of the Church, there has been pressure toward a normative body of interpretation, toward a standard of judgment (the historical Jesus, liturgical form, oral traditions, the words of the Apostles). What is in order now is a recovery of the freedom which is only possible within the context of obligation, limitation, rootage. This is the freedom of monastic or marital commitment: in some basic sense the nervous anxiety over who the person is recedes in proportion to the quality of the commitment. Thus (ideally) the monk can free himself by his commitment from (a) his search for the banks of a Tradition, and (b) his search for a mate (he becomes "married" to the Church). It is the investigator's opinion that this kind of freedom, in the main, produces a quiet, solid, and deeply sensitive posture--often, completely without ostentation. To use an analogy, the stream can be joyous because it is within its banks.

These "banks" need not turn into renewed forms of strangulating absolutism when the Protestant Principle is maintained, and when the over-riding sense is "we have been bought with a price." Doctrines are not to be used as idea-wombs from which anxious Christians peer out into the hostile world--an avoidance of their own responsibility as a thinking person. What is desired is a kind of "permanent immediacy" between the events of the Christian heritage and the exigencies of the cultural now. Or as Zahrnt puts it,

We are like travellers along a road. The moment an historical event takes place it is contemporaneous with us, as it were shoulder to shoulder. Then it goes past us and disappears further and further behind our backs. The more it loses its significance for the present, the greater becomes the distance between it and us, the

further away it is from us back down the road. . . . The event on which the Christian faith is grounded, the advent of Jesus Christ, is not, however, like these other historical events. All other historical events pass us by and eventually disappear behind us over the horizon, but faith maintains of this one event that it constantly remains contemporary with us, shoulder to shoulder. That is what we mean when we talk about "revelation".¹⁷

As the investigator sees it, the purpose of heresy is to keep the event of Jesus Christ from being betrayed by internal or external corrosion, or from simply "disappearing" into insignificance. Or to put it into the language of Paul, the treasure must be guarded even as it is poured out into society.

Heresy is an over-againstness.

In summary, this study seeks to lay the groundwork for the recovery of heresy as an over-againstness, a free-floating category of normative judgment, a means of protecting but not hoarding the Christian heritage. This, in full view of the horrors inflicted by paranoid orthodoxies of the past, and of the fact that truth can never be completely apprehended or adequately communicated by men. The essential witness of the Gospel continues to baffle the credulity, formulations, confessions of every generation; no verbal definition can contain it in every nuance.

Yet in spite of this acknowledgement, the broad catholic themes are known and knowable: creation, redemption, sin, grace, confession, forgiveness, servanthood. It may be that the on-going faith can be most efficiently perpetuated by guiding images, model life-styles (such as

¹⁷Heinz Zahrnt, The Historical Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 28.

Pike's truth/courage/love),¹⁸ rather than by verbal definitions. At any rate the charge of heresy could be brought whenever a contemporary Christian seems to abandon a dialogical relation to the dynamic past, in the spirit of "Who needs it?"

Nor is this to seek a place for theological vigilantism, for heresy-hunters seeking out persons who may have broken vows of membership. Rather, the goal would be to establish an atmosphere in which the charge of heresy can be made without hysterical or paranoid reaction--something to be expected by any self-respecting community. This would hopefully be done in the spirit that "all of us deviate from Christ", and that the faith requires the corrective discipline of mutual vigilance. Thus, without apology one Christian could observe "you seem to forget that there is more than one aspect to the Incarnation", and the other can respond with an even more acute observation, such as: "your theology is always in order, but your ethics are a shambles". And this could transpire (ideally) without the fire of heretic-burning--simply the serious concern over the purity of the faith and the "priesthood of all believers" which requires vigilance from every Christian.

It could well be that subsequent generations of Church historians will regard the prevailing theological indifference in America equally as damaging as the overt heresy proceedings of earlier days.

¹⁸James A. Pike, If This Be Heresy (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 99.

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APPENDIX

THE THEOLOGIAN'S TALE. 1

TORQUEMADA.

IN the heroic days when Ferdinand
 And Isabella ruled the Spanish land,
 And Torquemada, with his subtle brain,
 Ruled them, as Grand Inquisitor of Spain,
 In a great castle near Valladolid,
 Moated and high and by fair woodlands hid,
 There dwelt, as from the chronicles we learn,
 An old Hidalgo, proud and taciturn,
 Whose name has perished with his towers of stone,
 And all his actions, save this one alone ;
 This one so terrible, perhaps 'twere best
 If it, too, were forgotten with the rest ;
 Unless, perchance, our eyes can see therein
 The martyrdom triumphant o'er the sin ;
 A double picture, with its gloom and glow,
 The splendour overhead, the death below.

This sombre man counted each day as lost
 On which his feet no sacred threshold crossed ;
 And when he chanced the passing Host to meet,
 He knelt and prayed devoutly in the street ;
 Oft he confessed ; and with each mutinous thought,
 As with wild beasts at Ephesus, he fought.
 In deep contrition scourged himself in Lent,
 Walked in processions with his head down bent ;
 At plays of Corpus Christi oft was seen,
 And on Palm Sunday bore his bough of green.
 His sole diversion was to hunt the boar,
 Through tangled thickets of the forest hoar,
 Or with his jingling mules to hurry down
 To some grand bull-fight in the neighbouring town,
 Or in the crowd with lighted taper stand,
 When Jews were burned, or banished from the land.
 Then stirred within him a tumultuous joy ;
 The demon whose delight is to destroy
 Shook him, and shouted with a trumpet tone,
 " Kill ! kill ! and let the Lord find out his own ! "

And now, in that old castle in the wood,
 His daughters in the dawn of womanhood,
 Returning from their convent school, had made
 Resplendent with their bloom the forest shade,
 Reminding him of their dead mother's face,
 When first she came into that gloomy place,—
 A memory in his heart as dim and sweet
 As moonlight in a solitary street,
 Where the same rays, that lift the sea, are thrown
 Lovely but powerless upon walls of stone.
 These two fair daughters of a mother dead
 Were all the dream had left him as it fled.
 A joy at first, and then a growing care,
 As if a voice within him cried, " Beware ! "
 A vague presentiment of impending doom,
 Like ghostly footsteps in a vacant room,
 Haunted him day and night ; a formless fear

1 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Theologian's Tale: Torquemada", in The Poetical Works (London: Warne, 1882), IV.

That death to some one of his house was near,
 With dark surmises of a hidden crime,
 Made life itself a death before its time.
 Jealous, suspicious, with no sense of shame,
 A spy upon his daughters he became ;
 With velvet slippers, noiseless on the floors,
 He glided softly through half-open doors ;
 Now in the room, and now upon the stair,
 He stood beside them ere they were aware ;
 He listened in the passage when they talked,
 He watched them from the casement when they walked ;
 He saw the gipsy haunt the river's side,
 He saw the monk among the cork-trees glide ;
 And tortured by the mystery and the doubt
 Of some dark secret, past his finding out,
 Baffled he paused ; then reassured again
 Pursued the flying phantom of his brain.
 He watched them even when they knelt in church ;
 And then, descending lower in his search,
 Questioned the servants, and with eager eyes
 Listened incredulous to their replies ;
 The gipsy ? none had seen her in the wood !
 The monk ? a mendicant in search of food !

At length the awful revelation came,
 Crushing at once his pride of birth and name,
 The hopes his yearning bosom forward cast,
 And the ancestral glories of the past ;
 All fell together crumbling in disgrace,
 A turret rent from battlement to base.
 His daughters talking in the dead of night
 In their own chamber, and without a light,
 Listening, as he was wont, he overheard,

And learned the dreadful secret, word by word ;
 And hurrying from his castle, with a cry
 He raised his hands to the un pitying sky,
 Repeating one dread word, till bush and tree
 Caught it, and shuddering answered, " Heresy ! "

Wrapped in his cloak, his hat drawn o'er his face,
 Now hurrying forward, now with lingering pace,
 He walked all night the alleys of his park,
 With one unseen companion in the dark,
 The demon who within him lay in wait,
 And by his presence turned his love to hate,
 For ever muttering in an undertone,
 " Kill ! kill ! and let the Lord find out his own ! "

Upon the morrow, after early Mass,
 While yet the dew was glistening on the grass,
 And all the woods were musical with birds,
 The old Hidalgo, uttering fearful words,
 Walked homeward with the priest, and in his room
 Summoned his trembling daughters to their doom.
 When questioned, with brief answers they replied,
 Nor when accused evaded or denied ;
 Expostulations, passionate appeals,
 All that the human heart most fears or feels,
 In vain the Priest with earnest voice essayed,
 In vain the father threatened, wept, and prayed ;
 Until at last he said, with haughty mien,
 " The Holy Office, then, must intervene ! "

And now the Grand Inquisitor of Spain,
 With all the fifty horsemen of his train,
 His awful name resounding, like the blast
 Of funeral trumpets, as he onward passed,
 Came to Valladolid, and there began
 To harry the rich Jews with fire and ban.
 To him the Hidalgo went, and at the gate
 Demanded audience on affairs of state,
 And in a secret chamber stood before
 A venerable greybeard of fourscore,
 Dressed in the hood and habit of a friar;
 Out of his eyes flashed a consuming fire,
 And in his hand the mystic horn he held,
 Which poison and all noxious charms dispelled.
 He heard in silence the Hidalgo's tale,
 Then answered in a voice that made him quail:
 "Son of the Church! when Abraham of old
 To sacrifice his only son was told,
 He did not pause to parley nor protest,
 But hastened to obey the Lord's behest.

In him it was accounted righteousness;
 The Holy Church expects of thee no less!"

A sacred frenzy seized the father's brain,
 And Mercy from that hour implored in vain.
 Ah! who will e'er believe the words I say?
 His daughters he accused, and the same day
 They both were cast into the dungeon's gloom,
 That dismal ante-chamber of the tomb,
 Arraigned, condemned, and sentenced to the flame,
 The secret torture and the public shame.

Then to the Grand Inquisitor once more
 The Hidalgo went, more eager than before,
 And said: "When Abraham offered up his son,
 He clave the wood wherewith it might be done.
 By his example taught, let me too bring
 Wood from the forest for my offering!"
 And the deep voice, without a pause, replied:
 "Son of the Church! by faith now justified,
 Complete thy sacrifice, even as thou wilt;
 The Church absolves thy conscience from all guilt!"
 Then this most wretched father went his way
 Into the woods that round his castle lay,
 Where once his daughters in their childhood played
 With their young mother in the sun and shade.
 Now all the leaves had fallen; the branches bare
 Made a perpetual moaning in the air,
 And screaming from their eyries overhead
 The ravens sailed athwart the sky of lead.
 With his own hands he lopped the boughs and bound
 Faggots, that crackled with foreboding sound,
 And on his mules, caparisoned and gay
 With bells and tassels, sent them on their way.
 Then with his mind on one dark purpose bent,
 Again to the Inquisitor he went,
 And said: "Behold the faggots I have brought,
 And now, lest my atonement be as nought,
 Grant me one more request, one last desire,—
 With my own hand to light the funeral fire!"
 And Torquemada answered from his seat,
 "Son of the Church! thine offering is complete;
 Her servants through all ages shall not cease
 To magnify thy deed. Depart in peace!"

Upon the market-place, builded of stone
 The scaffold rose, whereon Death claimed his own.
 At the four corners, in stern attitude,
 Four statues of the Hebrew Prophets stood,
 Gazing with calm indifference in their eyes
 Upon this place of human sacrifice,
 Round which was gathering fast the eager crowd,
 With clamour of voices dissonant and loud,
 And every roof and window was alive
 With restless gazers, swarming like a hive.

The church-bells tolled, the chant of monks drew near,
 Loud trumpets stammered forth their notes of fear,
 A line of torches smoked along the street,
 There was a stir, a rush, a tramp of feet,
 And, with its banners floating in the air,
 Slowly the long procession crossed the square,
 And, to the statues of the Prophets bound,
 The victims stood, with faggots piled around.
 Then all the air a blast of trumpets shook,
 And louder sang the monks with bell and book,
 And the Hidalgo, lofty, stern, and proud,
 Lifted his torch, and, bursting through the crowd,
 Lighted in haste the faggots, and then fled,
 Lest those imploring eyes should strike him dead !

O pitiless skies ! why did your clouds retain
 For peasants' fields their floods of hoarded rain ?
 O pitiless earth ! why opened no abyss
 To bury in its chasm a crime like this ?

That night, a mingled column of fire and smoke
 From the dark thickets of the forest broke,
 And, glaring o'er the landscape leagues away,
 Made all the fields and hamlets bright as day.
 Wrapped in a sheet of flame the castle blazed,
 And as the villagers in terror gazed,
 They saw the figure of that cruel knight
 Lean from a window in the turret's height,
 His ghastly face illumined with the glare,
 His hands upraised above his head in prayer,
 Till the floor sank beneath him, and he fell
 Down the black hollow of that burning well.

Three centuries and more above his bones
 Have piled the oblivious years like funeral stones ;
 His name has perished with him, and no trace
 Remains on earth of his afflicted race ;
 But Torquemada's name, with clouds o'ercast,
 Looms in the distant landscape of the Past,
 Like a burnt tower upon a blackened heath,
 Lit by the fires of burning woods beneath !

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